CUTLASS AND CUDGEL

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"'NOW, SIR,' SAID THE LIEUTENANT HAUGHTILY, 'WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS?'"

CUTLASS AND CUDGEL.

CHAPTER I.



'HEIGH-HO-HA-HUM! Oh dear me!'

'What's matter, sir?'

'Matter, Dirty Dick? Nothing; only, heigh-ho-ha! Oh dear me, how sleepy I am!'

'Well, sir, I wouldn't open my mouth like that 'ere, 'fore the sun's up.'

'Why not?'

'No knowing what you might swallow off this here nasty, cold, foggy, stony coast.'

'There you go again, Dick; not so good as Lincolnshire coast, I suppose?'

'As good, sir? Why, how can it be?' said the broad, sturdy sailor addressed. 'Nothin' but great high stony rocks, full o' beds of great flat periwinkles and whelks; nowhere to land, nothin' to see. I am surprised at you, sir. Why, there arn't a morsel o' sand.'

'For not praising your nasty old flat sandy shore, with its marsh beyond, and its ague and bogs and fens.'

'Wish I was 'mong 'em now, sir. Wild ducks there, as is fit to eat, not iley fishy things like these here.'

'Oh, bother! Wish I could have had another hour or two's sleep. I say, Dirty Dick, are you sure the watch wasn't called too soon?'

.'Nay, sir, not a bit; and, beggin' your pardon, sir, if you wouldn't mind easin' off the Dirty—Dick's much easier to say.'

'Oh, very well, Dick. Don't be so thin-skinned about a nickname.'

'That's it, sir. I arn't a bit thin-skinned. Why, my skin's as thick as one of our beasts. I can't help it lookin' brown. Washes myself deal more than some o' my mates as calls me dirty. Strange and curious how a name o' that kind sticks.'

'Oh, I say, don't talk so,' said the lad by the rough sailor's side; and after another yawn he began to stride up and down the deck of His Majesty's cutter *White Hawk*, lying about a mile from the Freestone coast of Wessex.

It was soon after daybreak, the sea was perfectly calm and a thick grey mist hung around, making the deck and cordage wet and the air chilly, while the coast, with its vast walls of perpendicular rocks, looked weird and distant where a peep could be obtained amongst the wreaths of vapour.

'Don't know when I felt so hungry,' muttered the lad, as he thrust his hands into his breeches pockets, and stopped near the sailor, who smiled in the lad's frank-looking, handsome face.

'Ah, you always were a one to yeat, sir, ever since you first came aboard.'

'You're a noodle, Dick. Who wouldn't be hungry, fetched out of his cot at this time of the morning to take the watch. Hang the watch! bother the watch! Go and get me a biscuit, Dick, there's a good fellow.'

The sailor showed his white teeth, and took out a brass box.

'Can't get no biscuit yet, sir. Have a bit o' this. Keeps off the gnawin's wonderful.'

'Yah! who's going to chew tobacco!' cried the lad with a look of disgust, as he buttoned up his uniform jacket. 'Oh, hang it all, I wish the sun would come out!'

'Won't be long, sir; and then all this sea-haar will go.'

'Why don't you say mist?' cried the lad contemptuously.

''Acause it's sea-haar, and you can't make nowt else on it, sir!'

'They haven't seen anything of them in the night, I suppose?'

'No, sir; nowt. It scars me sometimes, the way they dodges us, and gets away. Don't think theer's anything queer about 'em, do you?'

'Queer? Yes, of course. They're smugglers, and as artful as can be.'

'Nay, sir, bad, I mean—you know, sir.'

'No, I don't, Dick,' cried the young officer pettishly. 'How can I know? Speak out.'

'Nay, I wean't say a word, sir; I don't want to get more scarred than I am sometimes now.'

'Get out! What do you mean? That old Bogey helps them to run their cargoes?'

'Nay, sir, I wean't say a word. It's all werry well for you to laugh, now it's daylight, and the sun coming out

It's when it's all black as pitch, as it takes howd on you worst.'

'You're a great baby, Dick,' cried the midshipman, as he went to the side of the cutter and looked over the low bulwark toward the east. 'Hah! here comes the sun.'

His eyes brightened as he welcomed the coming of the bright orb, invisible yet from where he stood; but the cold grey mist that hung around was becoming here and there, in patches, shot with a soft delicious rosy hue, which made the grey around turn opalescent rapidly, beginning to flash out pale yellow, which, as the middy watched, deepened into orange and gold.

'Lovely!' he said aloud, as he forgot in the glory of the scene the discomfort he had felt.

'Tidy, sir, pooty tidy,' said the sailor, who had come slowly up to where he stood. 'And you should see the morning come over our coast, sir. Call this lovely? Why, if you'd sin the sun rise there, it would mak' you stand on your head.'

'Rather see this on my feet, Dick,' cried the lad. 'Look at that! Hurrah! Up she comes!'

Up 'she'—otherwise the sun—did come, rolling slowly above the mist-covered sea, red, swollen, huge, and sending blood-tinted rays through and through the haze to glorify the hull, sails, and rigging of the smart cutter, and make the faces of the man at the helm and the other watchers glow as with new health.

The effect was magical. Just before all was cold and grey, and the clinging mist sent a shiver through those on deck; now, their eyes brightened with pleasure, as the very sight of the glowing orb seemed to have a warming —as it certainly had an enlivening—effect.

The great wreaths of mist yielded rapidly as the sun rose higher, the rays shooting through and through, making clear roads which flashed with light, and, as the clouds rolled away like the grey smoke of the sun's fire, the distant cliffs, which towered up steep and straight, like some titanic wall, came peering out now in patches bright with green and golden grey.

Archibald Raystoke—midshipman aboard His Majesty the king's cutter, stationed off the Freestone coast, to put a stop to the doings of a smuggler whose career the Government had thought it high time to notice—drew in a long breath, and forgot all about hunger and cold in the promise of a glorious day.

It was impossible to think of such trifling things in the full burst of so much beauty, for, as the sun rose higher, the sea, which had been blood-red and golden, began to turn of a vivid blue deeper than the clear sky overhead; the mist wreaths grew thinner and more transparent, and the pearly glistening foam, which followed the breaking of each wave at the foot of the mighty cliffs, added fresh beauty to the glorious scene.

'Look here, Dirty Dick,' began the middy, who burst out into a hearty fit of laughter as he saw the broad-shouldered sailor give his face a rub with the back of his hands, and look at them one after the other.

'Does it come off, Dick?' he said.

'Nay, sir; nothin' comes off,' said the man dolefully. ''Tis my natur' too, but it seems werry hard to be called dirty, when you arn't.'

'There, I beg pardon, Dick, and I will not call you so any more.'

'Thankye, sir; I s'pose you mean it, but you'll let it out again soon as you forget.'

'No, I will not, Dick. But, I say, look here: you are a cheat, though, are you not?'

'Me, sir? no!' cried the man excitedly.

'I mean about the Lincolnshire coast. Confess it isn't half so beautiful as this.'

'Oh, yes it is, sir. It's so much flatter. Why, you can't hardly find a place to land here, without getting your boat stove in.'

'If all's true, the smugglers know how to land things,' said Archibald, as he gazed thoughtfully at the cliffs.

'Oh, them! O' course, sir, they can go up the cliffs, and over 'em like flies in sugar basins. They get a spar over the edge, with a reg'lar pulley, and lets down over the boats, and then up the kegs and bales comes.'

'Ah, well, we must catch them at it some day, Dick, and then there'll be lots o' prize money for you all.'

'And for you too, sir; officers comes first. But we arn't got the prize yet, and it's my belief as we shan't get it.'

'Why?'

'Because it seems to me as there's something not all right about these here craft.'

'Of course there is, they are smugglers.'

'Yes, sir, and worse too. If they was all right, we shouldn't ha' been cruising 'bout here seven weeks, and never got a sight o' one of 'em, when we know they've been here all the time.'

'I don't understand you, Dick,' said the middy, as he watched the going and coming of the rock pigeons which flew straight for the cliff, seemed to pass right in, and then dashed out.

'Well, sir, I can't explain it. Them there's things as you can't explain, nor nobody else can't.'

He wrinkled up his face and shook his head, as if there were a great deal more behind.

'Now, what are you talking about, Dick?' cried the lad. 'You don't mean that the smuggler's a sort of ghost, and his lugger's all fancy?'

'Well, not exactly, sir, because if they was, they couldn't carry real cargoes, which wouldn't be like the smuggler and his lugger, sir, and, of course, then the kegs and lace wouldn't be no good. But there's a bit something wrong about these here people, and all the men thinks so too.'

'More shame for them!' said the middy quickly. 'Hi! look there, Dick; what's that?'

He seized the sailor by the shoulder, and pointed where, some five hundred yards away, close under the cliff, but on the rise of the line of breakers, there was something swimming slowly along.

Dick shaded his eyes, for no reason whatever, the sun being at his back, and gazed at the object in the water.

''Tarnt a porpus,' he said thoughtfully.

'*As if I didn't know that*,' cried the lad; and, running aft, he descended into the cabin, and returned with a glass, which he focussed and gazed through at the object rising steadily and falling with the heave of the sea.

'See her, sir?'

'Yes,' answered the middy, with his glass at his eye. 'It's a bullock or a cow.'

'Werry like, sir. There is sea-cows, I've heared.'

'Oh, but this isn't one of them. I believe it's a real cow, Dick.'

'Not she, sir. Real cows lives in Lincolnshire, and feeds on grass. I never see 'em go in the sea, only half-way up their legs in ponds, and stand a-waggin' their tails to keep off the flies. This here's a sea-cow, sir, sartin.'

'It's a cow, Dick; and it has tumbled off the cliff, and is swimming for its life,' said the lad, closing the glass.

The sailor chuckled.

'What are you laughing at?'

'At you, sir, beggin' your pardon. But you don't think as how a cow would be such a fool as to tumble off a cliff. Humans might, but cows is too cunning.'

'I don't believe you would be,' cried the lad smartly. 'Put you up there in such a fog as we've had, and where would you be?'

'Fast asleep in the first snug corner I could find,' said the sailor, as the midshipman ran aft, and descended into the cabin, to go to the end and tap on a door.

There was no answer, and he tapped again.

'Hullo!'

'Beg pardon, sir,' began the midshipman.

'Granted! Be off, and don't bother me again.'

There was a rustling sound, and a deep-toned breathing, that some rude people would have called a snore. The midshipman looked puzzled, hesitated, and then knocked again.

There came a smothered roar, like that of an angry beast.

'Beg pardon, sir.'

'Who's that?

'Raystoke, sir.'

'What do you want? Am I never to have a night's rest again?'

All this in smothered tones, as if the speaker was shut up in a cupboard with a blanket over his head.

'Wouldn't have troubled you, sir, but'—

'Smugglers in sight?'

'No, sir; it's a cow.'

'A what?'

'Cow, sir, overboard.'

'Quite right. Milk and water,' came in muffled tones.

'Beg pardon, sir, what shall I *do*?'

'Go and milk her, and don't bother me.'

'But she's swimming under the cliff, sir.'

'Go and ask her on board, then. Be off!'.

Archy Raystoke knew his commanding officer's ways, and after waiting a few moments, he said softly, after giving a tap or two on the panel—

'Shall I take the boat and get her aboard?'

There was a loud rustle; a bang as if some one had struck the bulkhead with his elbow, and then a voice roared—

'Look here, sir, if you don't be off and let me finish my sleep, I'll let go at you through the door. You're in charge of the deck. Go and do what's right, and don't bother me.'

Bang!

Another blow on the bulkhead, and rustling noise, and, as well as if he had seen it all, Archy knew that his officer had snuggled down under the clothes, and gone to sleep.

But he had the permission, and calling to a couple of the crew, he soon had the small boat in the water, with Dick and another man pulling towards where the cow was slowly swimming here and there, with its wet nose and two horns a very short distance above the surface.

'Now, then, Dick, is it a sea-cow?' cried Archy, as they drew nearer.

'Well, sir, what else can it be?'

'Ah, you obstinate!' cried the lad. 'Now, then, what are we going to do? We can't land her,' he continued,

looking up at the towering cliff, 'and, of course, we can't take her in the boat.'

'I'll soon manage that,' said Dick, leaving his rowing to take up a coil of rope he had thrown into the boat, and make a running noose.

'Yes, but'—

'It's all right, sir. Get this over her horns, and we can tow her alongside, and hyste her on deck in no time.'

The cow proved that she was accustomed to man, for, as the boat approached, she swam slowly to meet it, raising her nose a little to utter a loud bellow, as if glad to welcome the help. So quiet and gentle was the poor creature, that there was no difficulty in passing the noose over her horns, making the line fast to a ring-bolt, so as to keep her head well above the surface, and then Dick resumed his oar; and after a glance round to make sure that there was no place where the poor beast could be landed, Archie gave the order for them to row back to where the cutter lay in the bright sunshine, five hundred yards from the shore.

He looked in vain, for at the lowest part the green edge of the cliff was a couple of hundred feet above the level of the sea, and right and left of him the mighty walls of rock rose up, four, five, and even six hundred feet, and for the most part with a sheer descent to the water which washed their feet.

The cow took to her journey very kindly, helping the progress by swimming till they were alongside the cutter, where the men on deck were looking over the low side, and grinning with amusement.

'Pull her horns off, sir!' said Dick, in answer to a question, as he proceeded to pass the rope through a block, 'not it.'

But hadn't we better have a line round her?'

'If you want to cut her 'most in two, sir. We'll soon have her on board.'

Dick was as good as his word, for the task was easy with a vessel so low in the water as the cutter; and in a few minutes the unfortunate cow was standing dripping on deck.

CHAPTER II

CAN any one of you men milk?' said Lieutenant Brough, a little plump-looking man, of about five and thirty, as he stood in naval uniform staring at the new addition to His Majesty's cutter *White Hawk*, a well-fed dun cow, which stood steadily swinging her long tail to and fro, where she was tethered to the bulwarks, after vainly trying to make a meal off the well holystoned deck.

There was no reply, the men grinning one at the other, on hearing so novel a question. 'Do you men mean to say that not one amongst you can milk?' cried the lieutenant.

No one had spoken; but now, in a half-shrinking foolish way, Dick pulled his forelock, and made a kick out behind.

'You can?' cried the lieutenant, 'that's right; get a bucket and milk her. I'll have some for breakfast.'

'Didn't say as I could milk, sir,' said Dick. 'Seen 'em milk, though, down in Linkyshire, and know how it's done.'

'Then, of course, you can do it,' said the lieutenant shortly; 'look sharp!'

The men grinned, and Dirty Dick by no means looked sharp, but exceedingly blunt and foolish as he shuffled

along the deck, provided himself with a bucket, and then approached the cow, which had suddenly began chewing the cud.

'Look at her, mate,' said one of the sailors.

'What for?' said the man addressed.

'Some one's been giving her a quid o' bacca.'

'Go on.'

'But some one has. Look at her chewing.'

'Why, so she is!' said the sailor, scratching his head, as he watched the regular actions of the cow's jaw, as she stood blinking her eyes, and swinging her tail to and fro, apparently quite content; the more so, that the sun was shining upon her warmly, and the sea water rapidly quitting her skin for the deck, where it made a rivulet into one of the scuppers.

Jack the sailor is easily pleased, for the simple reason that anything is a relief from the tedium of life on ship-board; consequently the coming of the cow was like a half-holiday to them at the wrong end of the day, and they stood about nudging each other, as Dirty Dick trotted up with his bucket, Archy looking on as much amused as the men.

The cow blinked her eyes, and turned her head to smell at the bucket which Dick set down on the deck, and stood scratching his head.

Well, sir, go on,' said the lieutenant.—'Seems to me, now, Mr. Raystoke, that we ought to have cream and fresh butter. Capital prize you've taken.—Do you hear, sir? Go on.'

'Yes, sir. Beg pardon, sir, but you see I wants something to sit on. 'Nother bucket.'

'You, sir, fetch another bucket,' said the lieutenant sharply; and another was brought, turned upside down, and, taking the first bucket, amidst the titterings of the

men, Dick seated himself, leaned his head against the cow's side, placed the vessel between his legs, and began to operate in true dairyman style upon the cow.

Whack! Bang! Clatter!

There was a tremendous roar of laughter from every one on board except from Dirty Dick, who was down on his back a couple of yards away, staring at the cow as if wondering how she could have gone off as she did. For the quiet-looking, inoffensive beast was standing perfectly still again, blinking her eyes and chewing her cud, but writhing and twisting her tail about as if it were an eel, after, at Dick's first touch, raising one of her hind legs and sending the pail flying across the deck and the would-be milker backwards.

'Come, come,' said the lieutenant, wiping his eyes and trying to look very important and stern, 'that's not the right way, my man. Try again.'

Dick rose unwillingly, planted the upturned bucket once more in its place, and took the milking bucket from one of the men who had picked it up. Then, sitting down again rather nervously, he once more placed the vessel between his legs, stuck his head against the cow's side, and prepared to milk.

Whack!

The bucket flew along the deck again, and Dick bounded away, saving himself from falling this time as he was prepared, and made a sudden leap backwards to stand wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

There was another roar of laughter, and the lieutenant bade Dick try again.

The man gave his officer an appealing look which seemed to say, 'Tell me to board the enemy, sir, and I'll go, but don't ask me to do this.'

'Come; be smart!'

Dick turned, glanced wistfully at Archy, shaking his head at him reproachfully, sighed, and, taking the bucket again, he looked into it with his rugged brown face full of despair.

'It's quite empty, Dick,' said the middy, laughing.

'Yes, sir; there's nowt in it, and,' he added to himself, 'not like to be.'

Again he settled himself into his place in as business-like a way as a farm lad would who was accustomed to the cowshed, but the moment he began the cow gave her tail a swing, lifted her leg, and planted it in the bucket, holding it down on the deck.

'Pail's full,' cried Archy; and the men yelled with delight, their officer vainly trying to control his own mirth as Dick began to pat and apostrophise the cow.

'Coom, coom! coosh, cow, then,' he said soothingly. 'Tak' thy leg oot o' the boocket, my bairn;' and to the astonishment of all present the cow lifted her leg and set it down again on deck.

'Well done, my lad,' cried the lieutenant. 'Now, then, look sharp with the milk.'

Dick sighed, wiped his hands down the sides of his breeches, and began once more, but at the first touch of the big strong hands accustomed to handle capstan-bars and haul ropes, the cow gave a more vigorous kick than ever; away flew the bucket, and over went Dick on his back.

He sprung up angrily now in the midst of the laughter, and touched his forehead to his commanding officer.

'It arn't no good, sir; she's a beef cow, and not a milker.'

'You don't know your business, my lad,' said the lieutenant.

'But she's such a savage one, sir. Don't go anigh her, sir.'

'Nonsense!' said the lieutenant, going up to the cow, patting her and handling her ears and horns; to all of which attentions the animal submitted calmly enough, blinking her eyes, and gently swinging her tail.

'I think I could milk her, sir,' said Archy.

'Think so, Raystoke?' said the lieutenant. 'I was just thinking I should have liked some new milk.'

'So was I, sir. Shall I try?'

'Yes,' said the lieutenant. 'I believe I could do it myself. It always looks so easy. But no; won't do,' he said firmly, as he drew himself up and tried to look stern and tall and big, an impossibility with a man of five feet two inches in height, and whose physique had always been against his advance in the profession. For as a short energetic little man he might have gained promotion; as a little fat rosy fellow the Lords of the Admiralty thought not; and so, after endless disappointments regarding better things, he had been appointed commander of the little *White Hawk*, and sent to cruise off the south coast and about the Channel, to catch the smugglers who were always too clever to be caught.

'No,' he said shortly, as he drew himself up; 'won't do, Raystoke, though you and I are condemned to live in this miserable little cutter, and on a contemptible kind of duty, we must not forget that we are officers and gentlemen in His Majesty's service. Milking cows won't do. No; we must draw the line at milking cows. But I should have liked a drop for my breakfast.'

'Ahoy!' cried one of the men loudly.

'Ahoy yourself!' cried a voice from off the sea on the shore side, and all turned to see a boat approaching rowed

by a rough-looking fisherman, and with a lad of about sixteen sitting astern, who now rose up to answer the man who shouted.

'Where did he come from?' said the lieutenant. 'Anybody see him put off?'

'No, sir! no, sir!' came from all directions; and the lieutenant raised his glass to sweep the coast.

'What do you want?' cried the man at the side as the boat came on, and the lieutenant bade the man ask.

'Want?' shouted the lad, a sturdy-looking fellow with keen grey eyes and fair close curly hair all about his sunburned forehead. 'I've come after our cow!'

CHAPTER III.

'HOW do, Sir Risdon?'

The speaker was a curious-looking man of fifty, rough, sunburned, and evidently as keen as a well-worn knife. He was dressed like a farmer who had taken to fishing or like a fisherman who had taken to farming, and his nautical appearance seemed strange to a man who was leading a very meditative grey horse attached to a heavy cart, made more weighty by the greatcoat of caked mud the vehicle wore.

He had been leading the horse along what was called in Freestone a road, though its only pretensions to being a road was that it led from Shackle's farm to the fields which bordered the cliff, and consisted of two deep channels made by the farm tumbril wheels, and a shallow track formed by horses' hoofs, the said channels being more often full of water than of mud, and boasting the quality of never even in the hottest weather being dry.

The person Blenheim Shackle—farmer and fisher, in his canvas sailor's breeches, big boots, striped shirt, and red tassel cap—had accosted, was a tall, thin, aristocratic-looking gentleman, in a broad-skirted, shabby brown velvet coat, who was daintily picking his way, cane in hand, over the soft turf of the field, evidently deep in

thought, but sufficiently awake to what was around to make him stoop from time to time to pick up a glistening white-topped mushroom, and transfer it to one of his pockets with a satisfied smile.

'Ah, Master Shackle,' he said, starting slightly on being addressed. 'Well, thank you. A lovely morning, indeed.'

'Ay, the morning's right enough, Sir Risdon. Picking a few mushrooms, sir?'

'I—er—yes, Master Shackle. I have picked a few,' said the tall thin gentleman, colouring slightly. 'I—beg your pardon, Master Shackle, for doing so. I ought to have asked your leave.'

'Bah! not a bit,' said the fisher-farmer, with a chuckle. 'You're welcome, squire.'

'I thank you, Master Shackle—I thank you warmly. You see her ladyship is very fond of the taste of a fresh gathered mushroom, and if I see a few I like to take them to the Hoze.'

'Ay, to be sure,' said Shackle, as he thought to himself 'And precious glad to get them, you two poor half-starved creatures, with your show and sham, and titles and keep up appearances.'

'I—er—I have not got many, Master Shackle. Would you like to see?' continued the tall thin gentleman, raising the flap of one of his salt-box pockets.

'I don't want to see,' growled the other, as he stood patting the neck of his old grey horse. 'Been to the cliff edge?'

'I—yes, Master Shackle.'

'See the cutter?'

'I think I saw a small vessel lying some distance off, with white sails.'

'That's the *White Hawk*, Luff Brough. And I wanted to speak to you, Sir Risdon.'

The gentleman started.

'Not about—about that'—he stammered.

'Tchah! yes. It was about that, man,' said the other. 'Don't shy at it like a horse at a blue bogey in a windy lane.'

'But I told you, man, last time, that I would have no more to do with that wretched smuggling.'

'Don't call things by ugly names.'

'My good man, it is terrible. It is dishonourable, and the act is a breaking of the laws of our country.'

'Tchah! Not it, Sir Risdon,' cried the other so sharply, that the grey horse started forward, and had to be checked. 'Not the king's laws, but the laws of that Dutchman who has come and stuck himself on the throne. Why, sir, you ought to take a pleasure in breaking his laws, after the way he has robbed you, and turned you from a real gentleman, into a poor, hard-pressed country squire, who'—

'Hush! hush, Master Shackle!' said the tall gentleman huskily. 'Don't rake up my misfortunes.'

'Not I, Sir Risdon. I'm full o' sorrow and respect for a noble gentleman, who has suffered for the cause of the real king, who, when he comes, will set us all right.'

'Ah, Master Shackle, I'm losing heart.'

'Nay, don't do that, Sir Risdon; and as to a few mushrooms, why, you're welcome enough; and I'd often be sending a chicken or a few eggs, or a kit o' butter, or drop o' milk, all to the Hoze, only we're feared her ladyship might think it rude.'

'It's—it's very good of you, Master Shackle, and I shall never be able to repay you.'

'Tchah! who wants repaying, Sir Risdon? We have plenty at the farm, and it was on'y day 'fore yes'day as I

was out in my little lugger, and we'd took a lot o' mackrel! 'Ram," I says to my boy Ramillies, "think Sir Risdon would mind if I sent him a few fish up to the Hoze?"

'"Ay, father," he says, "they don't want us to send them fish. My lady's too proud!"'

Sir Risdon sighed, and the man watched him narrowly.

'It's a pity too,' the latter continued, 'specially as we often have so much fish we puts it on the land.'

'Er—if you would be good enough to send a little fish—of course very fresh, Master Shackle, and a few eggs, and a little butter to the Hoze, and let me have your bill by and by, I should be gratified.'

'On'y too glad, Sir Risdon, I will.—Think any one's been telling tales?'

'Tales?'

''Bout us, Sir Risdon.'

'About *us*!'

'You see the revenue cutter's hanging about here a deal, and it looks bad.'

'Surely no one would betray you, Master Shackle?'

'Hope not, Sir Risdon; but it's okkard. There's a three-masted lugger coming over from Ushant, and she may be in to-night. There's some nice thick fogs about now, and it's a quiet sea. Your cellars are quite empty, I s'pose?'

The last remark came so quickly, that the hearer started, and made no reply.

'You see, Sir Risdon, we might run the cargo, and stow it all up at my place, for we've plenty o' room; but if they got an idea of it aboard the cutter, she'd land some men somehow, and come and search me, but they wouldn't dare to come and search you. I've got a bad character, but you haven't.'

'No, no, Master Shackle; I cannot; I will not.'

'The lads could run it up the valley, and down into your cellar, Sir Risdon,' whispered the man, as if afraid that the old grey horse would hear; 'nobody would be a bit the wiser, and you'd be doing a neighbour a good turn.'

'I—I cannot, Master Shackle; it is against the law.'

'Dutchman's law, not the laws of Bonnie Prince Charlie. You will, Sir Risdon?'

'No—no, I dare not.'

'And it gives a neighbour a chance to beg your acceptance of a little drop o' real cognac, Sir Risdon—so good in case o' sickness. And a bit of prime tay, such as would please her ladyship. Then think how pleasant a pipe is, Sir Risdon; I've got a bit o' lovely tobacco at my place, and a length or two of French silk.'

'Master Shackle! Master Shackle!' cried the tall thin baronet piteously, 'how can you tempt a poor suffering gentleman like this?'

'Because I want to do you a bit of good, Sir Risdon, and myself too. I tell you it's safe enough. You've only to leave your side door open, and go to bed; that's all.'

'But I shall be as guilty as you.'

'Guilty?' the man laughed. 'I never could see a bit o' harm in doing what I do. Never feel shamed to look my boy Ramillies in the face. If a bit o' smuggling was wrong, Sir Risdon, think I'd do it? No, sir; I think o' them as was before me. My father was in Marlborough's wars, and he called me Blenheim, in honour of the battle he was in; and I called my boy Ramillies, and if ever he gets married, and has a son, he's to be Malplackey. I arn't ashamed to look him in the face.'

'But I shall be afraid to look in the face of my dear child.'

'Mistress Denise, Sir Risdon? Tchah! Bless her! I don' believe she'd like her father to miss getting a lot of things that would be good for him, and your madam. There, Sir Risdon; don't say another word about it. Leave the door open, and go to bed. You shan't hear anybody come or go away, and you're not obliged to look in the cellars for a few days.'

'But, my child—the old servant—suppose they hear?'

'What? The rats? Tell 'em to take no notice, Sir Risdon. Good day, Sir Risdon. That's settled, then?'

'Ye—es—I suppose so. This once only, Master Shackle.'

'Thank ye, Sir Risdon,' said the man. 'Jee, Dutchman!'

The horse tugged at the tumbril, and Sir Risdon went thoughtfully along the field, toward a clump of trees lying in a hollow, while Master Shackle went on chuckling to himself.

'Couldn't say me nay, poor fellow. Half starved they are sometimes. Wonder he don't give up the old place, and go away. Hope he won't. Them cellars are too vallyble. Hallo! What now?'

This to the fair curly-headed lad, who came trotting up across the short turf.

'Been looking at the cutter, father?'

'Oh, she don't want no looking at. Who brought those cows down here?'

'Jemmy Dadd.'

'He's a fool. We shall be having some of 'em going over the cliff. Go home and tell mother to put a clean napkin in a basket, and take two rolls of butter, a bit of honey, and a couple of chickens up to the Hoze.'

'Yes, father.'

And see if there's any eggs to take too.'

'Yes, father. But'—

'Well?'

'Think the lugger will come to-night?'

'No, I don't think anything, and don't you. Will you keep that rattle tongue of yours quiet? Never know me go chattering about luggers, do you?'

'No, father.'

'Then set your teeth hard, or you'll never be a man worth your salt. Want to grow into a Jemmy Dadd?'

'No father.'

'Then be off.'

The boy went off at a run, and the fisher-farmer led his horse along the two rutted tracks till he came down into the valley, and then went on and on, towards where a couple of men were at work in a field, doing nothing with all their might.

CHAPTER IV.

RAMILLIES—commonly known by his father's men as Ram—Shackle trotted up over the hill, stopping once to flop down on the grass to gaze at the cutter, lying a mile out now from the shore, and thinking how different she was with her trim rigging and white sails to the rough lugger of his father, and the dirty three-masted vessels that ran to and fro across the Channel, and upon which he had more than once taken a trip.

He rose with a sigh, and continued his journey down into the hollow, and along a regular trough among the hills, to the low, white-washed stone building, roofed with thin pieces of the same material, and gaily dotted and splashed with lichen and moss.

He was met by a comfortable-looking, ruddy-faced woman, who shouted,—'What is it, Ram?' when he was fifty yards away.

The boy stated his errand.

'Father says you were to take all that?'

'Yes.'

'Then there's a cargo coming ashore to-night, Ram.'

'Yes, mother, and the cutter's lying a mile out.'

'Oh, dear, dear, dear!' cried the woman; 'I hope there won't be no trouble, boy.'

She stood wiping her dry hands upon her apron, and gazed thoughtfully with wrinkled brow straight before her for a minute, as if conjuring up old scenes; then, taking down a basket as she moved inside, she began to pack up the various things in the dairy, while Ram looked on.

'Father didn't say anything about a bottle of cream, mother,' said the boy, grinning.

'Then hear, see, and say nothing, my lad,' cried his mother.

'And I don't think he said you was to send that piece of pickled pork, mother.'

'He said chickens, didn't he?'

'Said a chickun.'

'Chicken means chickens,' cried Mrs. Shackle, 'and you can't eat chicken without pork or bacon. 'Tisn't natural.'

'Father said two rolls of butter.'

'Yes, and I've put three. There, these are all the eggs I've got, and you mind you don't break 'em!'

'Oh, I say, mother,' cried Ram, 'aren't it heavy!'

'Nonsense! I could carry it on my finger; there, run along like a good boy, and you must ask for her ladyship, and be very respectful, and say, Mother's humble duty to you, my lady, and hopes you won't mind her sending a bit o' farm fare.'

'But she ought to be thankful to us, mother?'

'And so she will be, Ram!'

'But you make me speak as though we were to be much obliged to her for taking all these good things.'

'You take the basket, and hold your tongue. Father's right, you chatter a deal too much.'

Ram took the basket, grunted because it was so heavy,

and then set off up the hill-slope towards where the patch of thick woodland capped one side of the deep valley, and at last came in sight of a grim-looking stone house, with its windows for the most part covered by their drawn-down blinds. Under other circumstances, with fairly kept gardens and trim borders, the old-fashioned building, dating from the days of Henry VII., would have been attractive enough, with its background of trees, and fine view along the valley out to the far-stretching blue sea; but poverty seemed to have set its mark upon the place, and the boy was so impressed by the gloomy aspect of the house, that he ceased whistling as he went across the front, outside the low wall, and round to the back, where his progress was stopped by the scampering of feet, and a dog came up, barking loudly.

'Get out, or I'll jump on you—d'ye hear?' said Ram fiercely.

'Down, Grip, down!' cried a pleasant voice, and a girl of fifteen came running out, looking bright and animated with her flushed cheeks and long hair.

'Don't be afraid of him, Ram; he will not bite.'

'I'm not afraid of him, Miss Celia; if he'd tried to bite me, I'd have kicked him into the back-garden.'

'You would not dare to,' cried the girl indignantly.

'Oh yes, I would,' said Ram, showing his white teeth. 'Wouldn't do for me to be 'fraid of no dogs.'

The girl half turned away, but her eye caught the basket.

'What's that you came to sell?' she said.

'Sell? I don't come to sell. Father and mother sent this here. It's butter, and chickuns, and pork, and cream, and eggs.'

'Oh!' cried the girl joyously, 'my mother will be so'—

She stopped short, remembering sundry lessons she had received, and the tears came up into her eyes as she felt that she must be proud and not show her delight at the receipt of homely delicacies to which they were strangers.

'Take your basket to the side door, and deliver your message to Keziah,' she said distantly.

'Yes, miss,' said Ram, beginning to whistle, as he strode along with his basket, but he turned back directly and followed the girl.

'I say, Miss Celia,' he cried.

'Yes, Ram.'

'You like Grip, don't you?'

'Yes, of course.'

'Then I won't never kick him, miss. Only I arn't fond on him. Here, mate,' he continued, dropping on one knee, 'give us your paw.'

The dog, a sturdy-looking deerhound, growled, and closed up to his mistress.

'D'ye hear? give's your paw. What yer growling about?'

The dog didn't say, but growled more fiercely.

'Grip, down! Give him your paw,' cried the girl.

The dog turned his muzzle up to his mistress, and uttered a low whine.

'Says he don't like to shake hands with a lad like me,' said Ram, laughing.

'But I say he is to, sir,' cried the girl haughtily. 'Give him your paw, Grip.'

She took the dog by the ear and led him unwillingly toward the boy, whose eyes sparkled with delight while the hound whimpered and whined and protested, as if he had an unconquerable dislike to the act he was called upon to perform.

'Now,' cried the girl, 'directly, sir. Give him your paw.'

What followed seemed ludicrous in the extreme to the boy, for, in obedience to his mistress's orders, the dog lifted his left paw and turned his head away to gaze up at his mistress.

'The wrong paw, sir,' she cried. 'Now, again.'

'*Pow how!*' howled the dog, raising his paw now to have it seized by the boy, squeezed and then loosened, a



termination which seemed to give the animal the most profound satisfaction. For now it was over, he barked madly and rushed round and round the boy in the most friendly way.

'There, miss,' said Ram with a grin; 'we shall be friends now. Nex rats we ketch down home, I'll bring up here for him to kill. Hey, Grip! Rats! Rats!'

The dog bounded up to the boy, rose on his hind legs and placed his forepaws on the lad's chest, barking loudly

'Good dog, then. Good-bye, miss; I must get back.'

'Oh!'

'You call, miss?' cried the boy, turning as he went whistling away.

'Yes, yes, Ram,' said the girl hesitatingly, and glancing behind her, then up at the house where all was perfectly still. 'Do you remember coming up and bringing a basket about a month ago?'

'Yes miss, I r'member. That all, miss?'

'No,' said the girl, still hesitating. 'Ram, are the men coming up to the house in the middle of the night?'

'Dunno what you mean, miss.'

'You do, sir, for you were with them. I saw you and ever so many more come up with little barrels slung over their shoulders.'

Ram's face was a study in the comic line as he shook his head.

'Yes you were, sir, and it was wicked smuggling. I order you to tell me directly. Are they coming up to-night?'

'Mustn't tell,' said the boy slowly.

'Then they are,' cried the girl, with her handsome young face puckering up with the trouble which oppressed her, and after standing looking thoughtful and anxious for a few moments, she went away toward the front of the house, while Ram went round to the side and delivered his basket.

'Course we are,' he said to himself, as he went down the hill again. 'But I warn't going to blab. What a fuss people do make about a bit o' smuggling! How pretty she looks!' and he stopped short to admire her—the *she*

being the *White Hawk*, which lay motionless on the calm sea. 'Wish I could sail aboard a boat like that, and be dressed like that young chap with his sword. I would like to wear a sword. I told father so, and he said I was a fool.'

He threw himself down on the short turf, which was dotted with black and grey, as the rooks, jackdaws, and gulls marched about feeding together in the most friendly way, where the tiny striped snails hung upon the strands of grass by millions.

'It'll be a fog again to-night,' he said thoughtfully, 'and she's sure to come. Ha, ha, ha!' he laughed, as he made a derisive gesture towards the cutter; 'watch away. You may wear your gold lace and cocked hats and swords, but you won't catch us, my lads; we're too sharp for that.'

CHAPTER V.

RAM SHACKLE was quite right; the fog did begin to gather over the sea soon after sundown, and the depressing weather seemed to have a curious effect on Farmer Shackle, who kept getting up from his supper to go and look out through the open door, and come back smiling and rubbing his hands.

Mrs. Shackle was very quiet and grave-looking and silent for a time, but at last she ventured a question.

'Did you see her at sundown?'

'Ay, my lass. 'Bout eight mile out.'

'But the cutter?'

'Well, what about the cutter?'

'Will it be safe?'

'Safe? Tchah! I know what I'm 'bout.'

That being so, Mrs. Shackle made no remark, but went on cutting chunks of bread and butter for her son, to which the boy added pieces of cold salt pork, and then turned himself into a mill which went on slowly grinding up material for the making of a man, this raw material being duly manipulated by nature, and apportioned by her for the future making of the human mill.

'Now, Ram,' said his father, 'ready?'

'Yes, father,' said the boy, after getting his mouth into talking trim.

'Lanthorns! Off with you.'

'Lanthorns won't be no good in the fog.'

'Don't you be so mighty clever,' growled Shackle. 'How do you know that the fog reaches up far?'

'Did you signal s'afternoon, father?'

'Lanthorns! and look sharp, sir.'

The boy went into the back kitchen, took down from a shelf three horn-lanthorns, which had the peculiarity of being painted black save in one narrow part. Into these he glanced to see that they were all fitted with thick candles before passing a piece of rope through the rings at the top.

This done he took down a much smaller lanthorn, painted black all round, lit the candle within, and, taking this one in his hand, he hung the others over his shoulder, and prepared to start.

'Mind and don't you slip over the cliff, Ram,' said his mother.

'Tchah! don't scare the boy with that nonsense,' said the farmer angrily; 'why should he want to slip over the cliff? Put 'em well back, boy. Stop 'bout half an hour, and then come down.'

Ram nodded and went off whistling down along the hollow for some hundred yards toward the sea, and then, turning short off to the right, he began to climb a zigzag path which led higher and higher and more and more away to his left till it skirted the cliff, and he was climbing slowly up through the fog.

The lad's task was robbed of the appearance of peril by the darkness; but the danger never occurred to Ram, who had been up these cliff paths too often for his pleasure to

heed the breakneck nature of the rough sheep-track up and up the face of the cliff, leading to where it became a steep slope, which ran in and on some four hundred feet, forming one of the highest points in the neighbourhood.

'It's plaguey dark,' said Ram to himself. 'Wonder what they're going to bring to-night!'

He whistled softly as he climbed slowly on.

'Fog's thicker than it was last night. They won't see no lanthorns, I know.'

'Dunno, though,' he muttered a little higher up. 'Not quite so thick up here. How old Grip growled! But he had to do it. Aren't afraid of a dog like him. Look at that!'

He had climbed up the zigzag track another fifty feet, and stopped short to gaze away at the bright stars of the clear night with the great layer of fog all below him now.

'Father was right, but I dunno whether they'll be able to see from the lugger. Don't matter. They know the way, and they'd see the signal s'afternoon.'

He whistled softly as he went on higher, laughing all at once at an idea which struck him.

'Suppose they were to row right on to the cutter! Wouldn't it 'stonish them all? I know what I should do. Shove off directly into the fog. They wouldn't be able to see, and I wouldn't use the sweeps till I was out of hearing, and then—oh, here we are up a-top!'

For the sheep-track had come to an end upon what was really the dangerous part of the journey. The zigzag and the cliff-path had been bad, but a fall there would not have been hopeless, for the unfortunate who lost his footing would go down to the next path, or the next, a dozen places perhaps offering the means of checking the downward course, but up where the boy now stood was a slope

of short turf with long dry strands which made the grass terribly slippery, and once any one had fallen here, and was in motion, the slope was at so dangerous an elevation that he would rapidly gather impetus, and shoot right off into space to fall six hundred feet below on to the shore.

This danger did not check Ram's cheery whistle, and he climbed on, sticking his toes well into the short grass, and rising higher and higher till he reached some ragged shale with the grass, now very thin, and about a hundred feet back from the sea, in a spot which he felt would be well out of the sight of the cutter if those on board could see above the fog. He set down his lanthorns, two about five feet apart, lit them all, and held the third on the top of his head as he stood between the others, so that from seaward the lights would have appeared like a triangle.

It seemed all done in such a matter of course way that it was evident that Ram was accustomed to the task, and supporting the lanthorn on his head, first with one and then with the other hand, he went on whistling softly an old west country air, thinking the while about Sir Risdon and Lady Graeme, and about how poor they were, and how much better it was to live at a farmhouse where there was always plenty to eat, and where his father could go fishing in the lugger when he liked, and how he could farm and smuggle, and generally enjoy life.

'That's good half an hour,' said Ram, lowering his lanthorn, opening the door, and puffing out the candle, afterwards serving the others the same.

Whew—whew—whew—whew!

A peculiar whishing of wings from far overhead, as a flock of birds flew on through the darkness of the night, following the wonderful instinct which made them take flight to other lands.

'Wasn't geese; and I don't think it was ducks,' said the lad to himself, as he slung his darkened lanthorns together, and began to descend as coolly as if he had been provided by nature with wings to guard him against a fall down the cliff.

'Wonder whether they saw the lights,' he said to himself. 'Not much good showing them, if they were in the fog.'

He went on, gradually approaching the mist which lay below him, and at last was descending the zigzag path with the stars blotted out, and the tiny drops of moisture gathering on his eyelashes, finding his way more by instinct than sight.

'Come in with the tide 'bout 'leven,' said Ram, as he still descended the face of the cliff, then the path, and at last was well down in the little valley, whose mouth seemed to have been filled up in some convulsion of nature by a huge wall of cliff, under which the streamlet which ran from the hills had mined its way.

As soon as he was down on level ground, the boy started for home at a trot, gave the lanthorns into his mother's hands, and, after a brief inquiry as to his father's whereabouts, he started off once more.

The part of the cliff for which he made was exactly opposite Sir Risdon's old house, and to a stranger about the last place where it would be deemed possible for a smuggler to land his cargo.

Hence the successful landing of many a boat-load, which had been scattered the country through.

For there, at the foot of the cliff, lay a natural platform or pier, almost as level as if it had been formed for a landing stage. The deep water came right up to its edge, and here, at a chosen time of tide, a lugger could lie close

in, and her busy crew and their helpmates land keg and bale upon the huge ledge,—a floor of intensely hard stone, full of great ammonites, many a couple of feet across, monsters of shell-fish, which had gradually settled down and died, when the stone in which they lay had been soft mud.

Revenue boats had of course, from time to time, as they explored the coast, noted this natural landing-place, but as there was only a broad step twenty feet above this to form another platform, and then the cliffs ran straight up two hundred feet slightly inclined over toward the sea, and the existence of even a moderate surf would have meant wreck, it was never even deemed likely that there was danger here, and consequently it was left unwatched.

The smugglers had a different opinion of the place, and on Ram reaching the spot he was in nowise surprised to find a group of about thirty men on the cliff, clustered about the end of a spar, whose butt was run down into a hole in the rock, which lay a foot beneath the turf, and at whose end, as it rose at an angle, was a pulley block and rope run through ready for use should the lugger come.

'Where's father?' whispered Ram to one of the men, who looked curiously indistinct amid the fog.

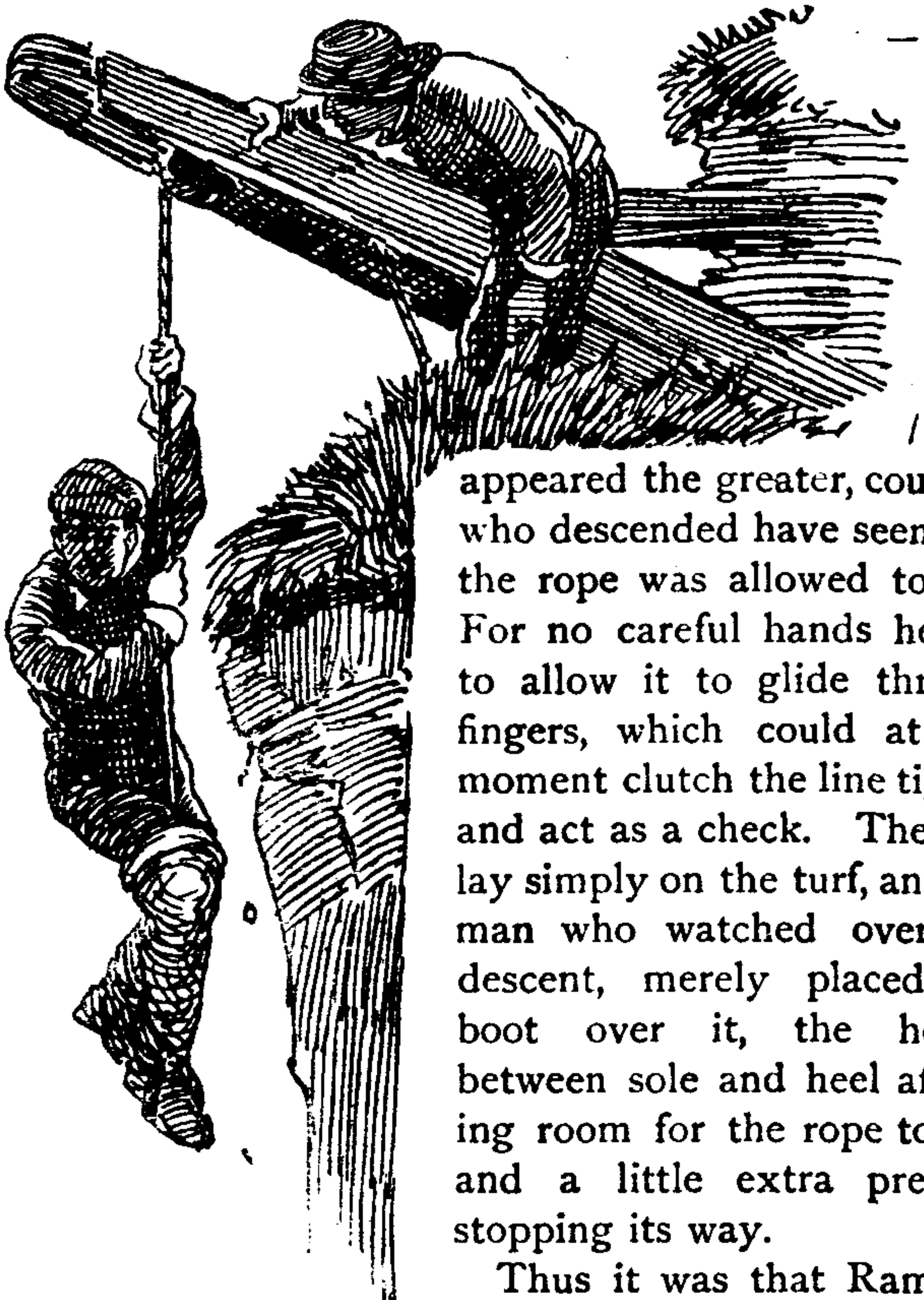
'Here, boy,' was whispered close to his ear. 'Going down to help?'

'May I, father?'

Shackle grunted; and, after speaking to one of the men, Ram took hold of the loop at the end of the rope, thrust a leg through, held on tightly, and, after the word was given, swung himself off into the fog.

The well-oiled wheel ran fast, and it was a strange experience that of gliding rapidly down and steadily turning round and round with the thick darkness all

around, and nothing to show that he who descended was not stationary. The peril of such a run down would have



appeared the greater, could he who descended have seen how the rope was allowed to run. For no careful hands held it to allow it to glide through fingers, which could at any moment clutch the line tightly and act as a check. The rope lay simply on the turf, and the man who watched over the descent, merely placed his boot over it, the hollow between sole and heel affording room for the rope to run, and a little extra pressure stopping its way.

Thus it was that Ram was allowed to glide rapidly down, till by experience the man knew that he was nearly at the bottom when the rope began to run more slowly, and then was checked exactly

as the boy's feet touched the stone shelf, and he stepped from the loop on to the ammonite-studded rock.

Dimly seen about him was a group of a dozen men, whose faces looked mysterious and strange, and this was added to by the silence, for only one spoke, and he when he was addressed, for the first few minutes after Ram's arrival among them, every one there being listening attentively for the distant beat of oars.

'Think she'll come to-night, young Ram?' said the man close by him.

'Dunno.'

'Been to show the lights?'

'Yes.'

'Was there any fog up there?'

'No; clear as could be.'

'Then she may come. Pst!'

Hardly a breath could be heard then as ears were strained, and after a good deal of doubt had been felt, a kind of thrill ran through the men who had taken hold of a line fastened to a stanchion and lowered themselves down to the broad ledge.

The low, regular, slow beat of great sweeps became now audible, but though Ram strained his eyes seaward, nothing was visible for quite another ten minutes, when, as the boy stood at the brink of the upper ledge he dimly saw something darker than the mist coming into view. Soon there came a faint crunching noise as of a fender being crushed against the rock, followed by the sound of ropes drawn over the bulwark, and Ram hesitated no longer, but ran to the loop, placed his leg through it, gave the signal by shaking the rope, and in an instant he was snatched from his feet, run up, the rope drawn in, and he was landed on the turf.

A small bag of stones was then attached to the loop, the wheel spun round, and the bag went whizzing down, while the group of men stood waiting and waiting, for they could see nothing below, hardly see each other, so dense was the mist now.

Sundry familiar sounds arose from time to time, and more than once the farmer uttered an ejaculation full of impatience at the length of time taken up in bringing the vessel below and taking precautions to keep her from grinding and bumping against the edge of the shelf, for though the sea was calm, there was the swell to contend with.

At last.

There was a murmur from below which those two hundred feet above knew well, and as two stood ready, another man by them took hold of the rope, and suddenly started off at a run, disappearing at once in the fog, while a peculiar whizzing sound was heard, as the little wheel in the block now ran round till all at once a couple of kegs and the bag of stones appeared level with the top of the cliff. These were seized, unhitched, and as the bag ran down, a man knelt, fitted a short rope about the kegs and hoisted them on his shoulder, just as the man who held the rope trotted up out of the fog into which the other with the kegs disappeared.

There was a faint hiss, and away ran the man again bringing the next two kegs up rapidly, to be set at liberty, slung, and hoisted on another man's back as the hauler came back out of the fog.

And so the unloading went on with marvellous rapidity, the hauler rushing off into the fog, a couple of kegs coming up into sight, being taken out of the loops, slung and hoisted just as the hauler came back and the bearer

disappeared, till quite a line of men were trudging slowly up the hill, down into the valley, and up again toward Sir Risdon Graeme's old house, the Hoze, till all the bearers were gone, and the kegs still kept coming up out of the fog.

The silence was astonishing, considering the amount of work being done and the rapidity with which all went on. Away to left and right sentries were placed, from among the haulers who, as they grew tired by their exertions in running up the kegs, were placed there to rest and listen for danger from seaward; but hour after hour went on, the carriers, augmented by a dozen more, came and went in two bands now, so that part were returning as the others were going.

But still they were not in sufficient force, for the Hoze was some distance away, and the number of kegs kept increasing on the turf at the top of the cliff.

About half the cargo was landed when Shackle whispered an order to Ram, who at once stooped to pick up a keg.

'No, no; run without, and see that they store them all up well.'

Ram was used to the business, and he went off at a trot, breasted the hill, dived down into the hollow, and then passing men going and coming, made for the Hoze, entered by the side door, made his way along a stone passage, and then down into a huge vault with groined roof lit by a couple of lanthorns hanging from hooks.

Here for the next three hours he worked hard, helping to stack the little brandy kegs at first, and afterwards the small tightly packed bales and chests which were brought more quickly now—a dozen of swarthy, dirty-looking men, with earrings and short loose canvass trousers which looked

like petticoats, helping to bring up the cargo, and showed by their presence that all had been landed from the lugger —that which was now being brought up consisting of the accumulation on the ledges and at the top of the cliff.

'Much more?' Ram kept asking as he toiled away, wet now with perspiration.

'Ay, ay, lad, it's a long cargo,' he kept hearing; and the lanthorns had to be shifted twice as the stacks of kegs and bales increased, till just as the boy began to think the loads would never end, he realised that the French sailors had not been up lately, and one of their own men suddenly said—

'Last!'

Ram drew a breath full of relief as the men came out silently, and he stopped behind with one lanthorn only alight to lock the door of the great vault, and then stood in the stone passage, thinking how quiet and still the house seemed.

He went out, closing the door after him, and stood in the garden.

'Wonder whether Miss Celia heard us,' he said; 'never thought of it before; they must have tied up old Grip.'

He glanced up at the windows as he went out, then they seemed to disappear in the mist as he made for the track and went downwards, to hear low voices, and directly after he encountered his father.

'Got 'em all right, boy?'

'Yes, father,' said Ram, handing the key. 'Lugger gone?'

'Hour and a half ago, lad; just got her empty as the tide turned. Best run we've had.'

He burst into a low fit of chuckling.

'What are you laughing at, father?'

'I was thinking how artful revenue cutters are, boy. I don't believe that *White Hawk's* more than half a mile away.

'But then see what a fog it was, father!'

'Tchah! to me it's just the same as a moonshiny night, boy. There, come on home and get to bed. Must be up early; lots to do to-day.'

Seeing that it could not be long before morning, Ram asked himself what was the use of his going to bed; but he said nothing, only hurried to keep pace with his father; and soon after, feeling fagged out, he was fast asleep, and dreaming that whenever he piled the kegs up they kept on rolling down about him, and that the midshipman from the *White Hawk* stood looking on, and laughing at him for being clumsy, and then he awoke fancying he was called.

It was quite right, for Farmer Shackle was shouting—

'Now you, Ramillies, are you going to sleep there all day?'

CHAPTER VI.

RAM had thrown himself down, dressed as he was, so that an interview with a bucket of water at the back door, and a good rub with the jack towel, were sufficient to brighten him up for the breakfast waiting, and the boy was not long before he was partaking heartily of the bowl of bread and milk his mother placed before him, his father muttering and grumbling the while to himself.

'I'm sure you needn't be so cross this morning, master,' said Mrs. Shackle reproachfully.

'If you had as much to fret you as I do, wife, you'd be cross.'

'Why, you told me this morning that you carried your crop of sea hay without a drop of water on it.'

Farmer Shackle shut one eye, tightened up his mouth, and looked with his other eye at his wife, which was his idea of laughing.

'Well, then,' she said, 'what makes you so cross?'

'Cross! enough to make any man cross. I shall be ruined—such a set of careless people about me. Those cows left out on the cliff field all last night, and Tally must have gone over, for I can't see her anywhere.'

'Oh, poor Tally! my kindest cow,' cried Mrs. Shackle.

'Yes, I shall set that down to you Ramillies. That's a flogging for you if she isn't found.'

'No, no, master; don't be so hard. The poor boy was out all nigh(looking after signals and '—

Bang! down came the farmer's fist on the table making the plates and basins jump.

'Hay, woman, hay!' he roared. 'Mind what you're talking about!'

'Don't do that, Blenheim!' cried Mrs. Shackle. 'You quite frightened me.'

'Yes, I'll frighten the whole lot of you. Ten golden pounds gone over the cliff through that boy's neglect.'

'Well, never mind, dear. You made ever so much more than that last night, I'll be bound!'

'Will you hold your tongue?' roared the farmer. 'There, make haste and finish that food, boy. Take Jemmy Dadd and the boat and find her. Skin's worth a few shillings. I must have that.'

'Did you look over the cliff, father?' asked Ram.

'I looked over? Of course, but how could I see in that fog?'

Ram was soon out and away, to hunt up Jemmy Dadd, whom he found at last with his eyes half-closed, yawning prodigiously. They went down to the boat, launched her, and rowed out along under the tremendous cliffs, and were about to give up in despair, convinced that the unfortunate cow had been swept right out to sea, when Ram exclaimed—

'Look yonder, Jem!'

'What for?' grumbled the man; 'I'm half asleep, now.'

'Never mind that! Look at the cutter.'

'Shan't! I've seen un times enough.'

'Yes, yes; but look on her deck.'

'What for?' said Jemmy, who was steadily pulling homeward.

'Oh, what an obstinate chap you are, Jemmy! Look there; Tally's on deck.'

'Ck!' ejaculated the man, this being meant for a derisive laugh. 'Why don't you say she's having a ride in the Saxham coach.'

'I tell you she is. They've got her there, and the sailors are trying to milk her.'

'Then I wish 'em luck,' said Jemmy. 'There's only one man as can milk Tally, and that's me.'

'Turn the boat's head, and let's go for her.'

'Ck!' ejaculated Jemmy again. 'What a one you are to joke, Ram Shackle; but it won't do this mornin'. I'm burst up with sleep.'

'Open your stupid eyes, and look for once. I tell you they've got Tally on the deck of the cutter.'

'And I tell you, you young Ram Shackle, I'm too sleepy to see fun anywhere. Won't do, my lad—won't do.'

Ram jumped up, stepped over the thwart, seized the man's head, and screwed it round toward the cutter, where the scene previously described was plain in the sunshine.

'Well!' ejaculated Jemmy, 'so she be.'

'Why couldn't you believe me before, when I told you?'

'Thought you was gammoning me, my lad!'

'There, row away!' cried Ram; and as soon as they were well within hearing he answered the hail, and next shouted—

'I've come after our cow.'

'Very undignified proceeding, Mr. Raystoke,' said the lieutenant, busily walking up and down as the boat with

Ram in it was being rowed alongside. 'It a'l comes of being appointed to a wretched, little cobble boat like this, and sent on smuggling duty. If I—if we had been aboard a frigate, or even a sloop-of-war, we shouldn't have had such an affair as this. Why, confound that boy's impudence, he has jumped on board. Go and speak to him; order him off; pitch him overboard; anything. How dare he!'

Archy drew himself up, laid one hand upon his dirk, and strutted up to Ram, looking 'as big as a small ossifer,' as Dirty Dick said afterwards; and gave him a smart slap on the shoulder as he was going after the cow.

'Here, you sir!' cried Archy, as the boy faced round. 'What do you mean by coming aboard one of His Majesty's ships like that?'

'Eh?'

'Touch your hat, sir, when an officer speaks to you.'

'Touch my hat to you like I do to Sir Risdon?'

'Like you do to any gentleman, sir.'

'Oh, very well,' said Ram giving one of his fair brown curls a tug, and showing his teeth.

'That's better. Now then, what do you want?'

'Our Tally.'

'Your what?'

'Our cow, Tally.'

'How do I know it's yours?'

'Why, it is. She must have walked over the cliff in the fog. Was your cutter close under so as she fell on deck?'

'Of course not, bumpkin,' said Archy impatiently, as the men burst into a guffaw, and then looked horribly serious as if they had not smiled. 'We saw her swimming and fetched her on board.'

'Thank ye,' said Ram. 'I say, how am I to get her home? Can you lend us a rope?'

'Who are you, boy?' said the lieutenant, marching up.

Ram faced round, stared at the officer's rather shabby uniform, and gave his curl another tug before pulling his red cap over his brow.

'Ram Shackle, sir.'

'Is—is that your name, sir,' said the lieutenant pompously, 'or are you trying to get a laugh at my expense?'

Ram stared.

'Do you hear what I say, sir?'

'Yes, but I dunno what you mean.'

'Here, my man, what's that boy's name?' cried the lieutenant to Jemmy Dadd in the boat.

'Ram Shackle,' said Jemmy gruffly. 'Christen Rammylees!'

'And is this your cow?'

'No, sir!'

'Then, you young rascal, how dare you come and claim it,' cried the lieutenant wrathfully.

'Because it's ours. My father's; I didn't mean it was my own.'

'Can you give me some proof that it is yours?' said the lieutenant.

'Eh!' exclaimed Ram, staring.

'I say, show me that the cow is yours, and you shall have her.'

'Oh,' cried Ram, and he ran to the side, unfastened the rope used as a halter for the patient beast, ran right forward, and began to call, 'Tally, Tally! Coosh-cow, coosh-cow!'

The effect was magical, the cow turned sharply round,

stretched out her nose so as to make her windpipe straight, and uttered a low soft lowing, as she walked straight forward to where Ram stood, thrust her nose under his arm, and stood swinging her tail to and fro.

'Mr. Raystoke!'

'Ay, ay, sir!' said Archy, going aft and saluting.

'It seems to be their cow; let them take it ashore.'

'Ay, ay, sir!'

'Stop. Bring the boy here,' said the lieutenant.

Archy marched forward.

'Come here, boy,' he said importantly; and Ram followed him to where the little fat officer stood near the helm, frowning.

'Now, sir,' said the lieutenant, 'I want you to answer me a few questions. What is your name—no, no, stop, you told me before. Where do you live?'

'Yonder, at the farm.'

'Oh! at the farm. Look here, boy, did you ever hear of smugglers?'

'What?'

'Did you ever hear of smugglers?'

'Yes, lots o' times,' said Ram glibly. 'They're chaps that goes across to France and foreign countries, and brings shipfuls o' things over here.'

'Yes, that's right. Ever seen any about here?'

'Well,' said Ram, taking off his red cap, and scratching his curly head, 'I dessay I have. Father says you never know who may be a smuggler: they're all like any one else.'

'Humph! Know where they land their cargoes?'

'Oh, yes; I've heard tell as they land 'em all along the cliff here.'

'Bah! impossible,' shouted the lieutenant.

'Is it, sir?' said Ram vacantly. 'My father said it was true.'

'Seen any smugglers' craft about during the last few days?'

'No, sir; not one,' cried the boy with perfect truth.

'That will do, boy. Mr. Raystoke let him take his cow and go.'

'Ay, ay, sir!'

'Then get the gig alongside, and we'll explore round more of the coast close in.'

'Ay, ay, sir! Now, boy, this way.'

Ram looked vacantly about him, but there was a very keen twinkle about his eyes, as he followed Archy forward to where the cow stood blinking her eyes, and swinging her tail amongst the men.

'I say,' he said.

'Did you speak to me, sir?' cried Archy, facing round, and frowning.

'Yes. Is that little sword sharp?'

'Of course.'

'Pull it out, and let's have a look.'

Archy frowned.

'Take your cow and go,' he said. 'She is a miserable thing without a drop of milk in her.'

'What?' cried Ram, with his face becoming animated. Then he shouted to the man in the boat, 'Hi! Jemmy, he says Tally's got no milk in her.'

'How do he know?' cried Jem scornfully.

'Why, I tried ever so long,' said Dick, who could not refrain from joining in.

'Ck!' laughed Jemmy.

'Why, she's our best cow,' cried Ram. 'I say skipper.'

'Here, you mustn't speak to an officer like that,' whispered Archy.

'What does the boy want?' said the plump little lieutenant, marching forward.

'On'y want our cow.'

'Then take her, sir, and go!

'Have a drop of milk?'

'No,' said the lieutenant, turning his back. 'Perhaps Mr. Raystoke here might like a little. Can you milk?'

'I can't,' said Ram, shaking his head. 'He can. Here, Jemmy, take hold of the painter and come aboard.'

'Stop!' cried the lieutenant, 'you must not speak like that. You must ask leave, sir.'

'Ask who?' said Ram, vacantly.

'Touch your cap, and ask the lieutenant to let you.

'Why, I have touched it twice. Want me to pull my hair off? I say, skipper, if you'll let him come aboard—oh! he is aboard now'—for Jemmy was already making the boat fast.—'Here, give me a clean pail.'

The little commander of the cutter tried to look important, and Archy more so, but they forgot everything disciplinarian the next moment, in the interest of the proceedings, as Jemmy Dadd took the bucket handed to him, turned another up beside the side of the cow, and as he was sitting down, Dirty Dick dug his elbows into his messmates' ribs right and left, whispered 'Look out! and over he goes.' Then he drew in a long breath, ready for a roar of laughter when the bucket went flying, and stood staring waiting to explode.

But, to Dick's great disappointment, Tally uttered a soft low, and began to swing her tail gently round, so as to give Jemmy a pat on the back. At regular intervals

there was a whishing noise, then another whishing noise half a tone lower, then *whish—whosh—whish—whosh*, two streams of rich new milk began to pour into the bucket, whose bottom was soon covered, and a white froth began to appear on the top.

'I say!' cried Dick eagerly, 'shall I lash her legs?'

'What for?' growled Jemmy.

''Cause she'll kick it over directly.'

'Not she. You wouldn't kick it over, would you, Tally, old cow?'

The cow waved her tail and whisked it about the man's neck as the milking went on, to the delight of the men, who began to see biscuit and milk in prospect, while the two officers, who were none the less eager for a draught as a change from their miserable ordinary fare, veiled their expectations under a severe aspect of importance.

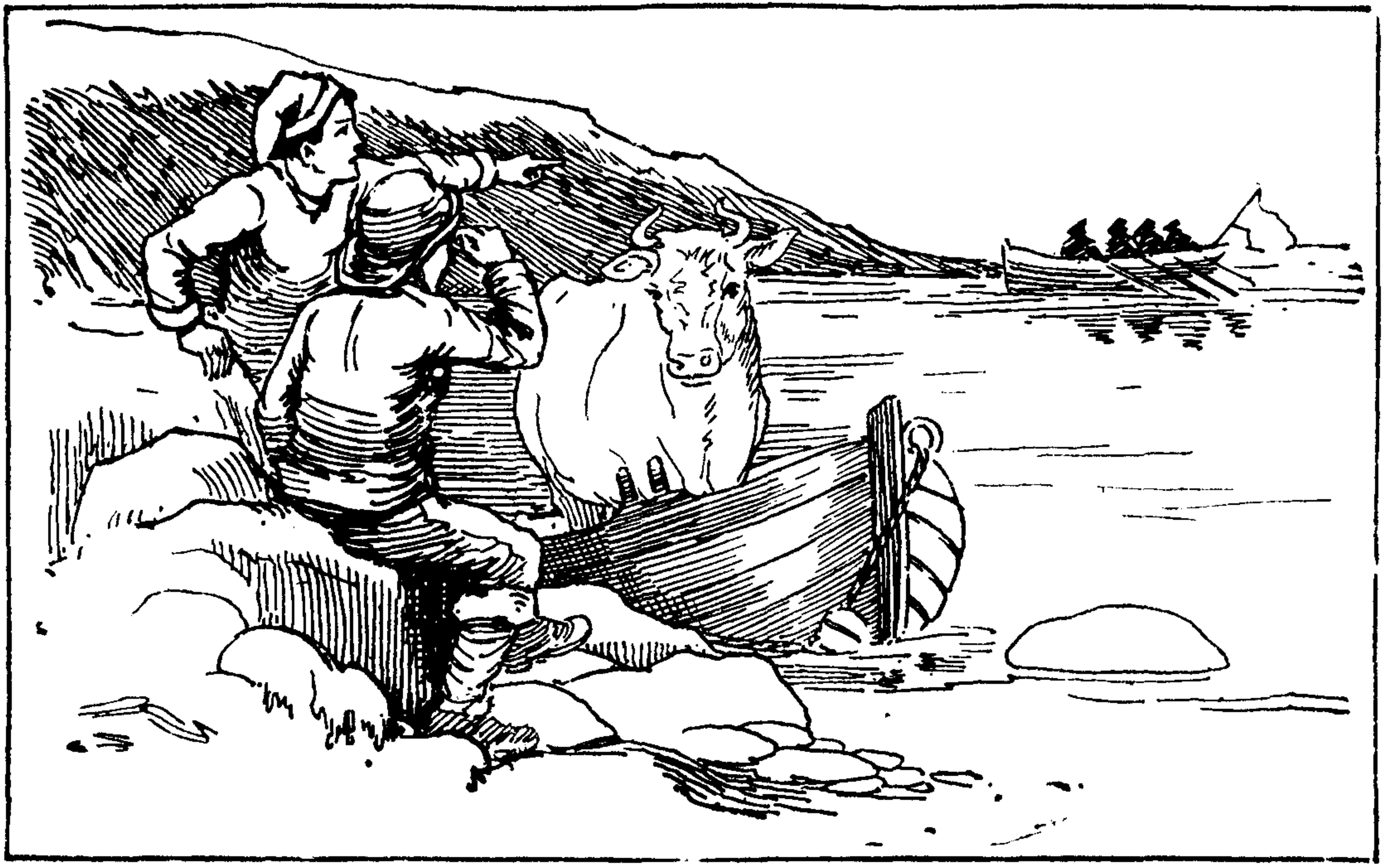
'Here you are,' said Jemmy, drawing back at last—while Dick seemed to be watching, in a state of agony, lest a kick should upset the soft white contents of the bucket—'More'n a gallon this time. How much are we to leave aboard?'

'All of it,' said Ram generously; 'they deserve it for saving the cow. I say, you,' he continued, turning to Archy, 'what do you say to her now?'

'Thank you,' replied Archy. 'Here, Dick, take that bucket aft, and you, my lads, open the side there, and help them to get the cow overboard.'

'Thank ye, sir,' said Ram, smiling. 'I say, Jemmy, she'd stand in the boat, wouldn't she? or would she put her feet through?'

'Let's try,' was the laconic reply, and taking hold of the rope that had been used as a halter, the man stepped down into the boat, the cow, after a little coaxing, following,



"'WHAT ARE THEY UP TO?'"—*Page* 62.

without putting her feet through, and showing great activity for so clumsy-looking a beast. Ram followed, and took one of the oars, settled down behind Jemmy, and the next minute, with the whole crew of the cutter standing grinning at the side, they began to row shoreward.

'How about the tide, Jemmy?' said Ram, when they had been rowing a few minutes, with the cow standing placidly in the boat.

'Too high, can't do it,' said the man.

'Let's row to the ledge then, and land there till the tide goes down.'

'Right,' said Jemmy, and they bore off a little to the east, made straight for the shelf of rock, which was just awash; and as they rowed, they saw the lieutenant and the midshipman enter the light gig, four men dropped their oars in the water, and with the drops flashing from the blades, the gig came swiftly after them.

'Why, they're coming here too, Jemmy,' said Ram, as they reached the ledge, and leaped on to the ammonite-studded stone, over which the water glided and then ran back.

'Well, let 'em,' said Jemmy, following suit with the painter, the cow standing contentedly with her eyes half closed. 'Don't matter to us, lad, so long as they didn't come last night.'

They made fast the hawser to an iron stanchion, one of several dotted about and pretty well hidden by the water, climbed up on the rock, and sat down in the warm sunshine to wait for the turn of the tide, while after a pull in one direction, the gig's course was altered, and they saw its course changed again.

'I liked that chap,' said Ram, as he gazed across a

few hundred yards of smooth water, at where Archy sat in his uniform, steering.

'What are they up to?' said Jemmy, shading his eyes. Then quite excitedly, 'Say, lad, lookye yonder,' he whispered.

'I was looking,' cried Ram excitedly; 'they've picked up a brandy keg.'

There was no denying the fact; and as the dripping little barrel was placed by one of the men in the fore part of the gig, the others gave way, and the light vessel came rapidly now toward the ledge.

Archy was shading his eyes just then, and pointing out something to the lieutenant a little to the left of where Ram and his companion were seated, and the boy's eyes, trained by his nefarious habits, gazed sharply in search of danger or criminating evidence, in the direction the midshipman pointed.

A chill of horror ran through him, for there, with the wash of the tide half covering and then leaving them bare, were two more brandy kegs, which had been missed the previous night during the fog.

'Ah!' ejaculated Ram, as in imagination he saw the well-filled vault, and the crew of the cutter being marched up to make a seizure, and arrest his father perhaps.

If he could but get away and give the alarm!

CHAPTER VII.

'GET away, and give the alarm?'

How could we?

There was no rope and pulley up on the cliff now, and the boat was occupied by the cow; while, even if it had been empty, it would have meant a six mile row to reach a landing-place at that time of the tide, and an eight miles' walk back.

And here was the cutter's gig close to them, and the lieutenant ready to ask him the meaning of the smuggled spirits being there.

For there was no mistaking the fact that the kegs were full of smuggled spirit. The one the king's men had dragged dripping from the sea, bore certain unmistakable markings, and it was evidently brother to those on the rock.

Ram and Jemmy had no time for thinking; the gig was run quickly up alongside of the ledge, and Dick tossed in his oar, sprang out, sending the clear water splashing with his bare feet, as he crossed up to the kegs, and, taking one under each arm, went more slowly and cautiously back to the boat, where his messmates took them carefully, with many a chuckle and grin, to deposit them beside the others.

'Now, my lad, run her alongside of the cow—I mean of the other boat,' cried the lieutenant.

This was quickly done, and the little officer turned sharply to where Ram and Jemmy Dadd were seated on the rock, looking on as stolidly as if nothing whatever was coming.

'Hi! you, sir; come here!' cried the lieutenant.

'Me, or him?' replied Ram coolly.

'You, sir.'

Ram got up, whistled softly, and went down to the boat.

'Want some more milk?' he said, with a grin.

'Silence, sir! Do you see those?'

'What, them tubs?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Not till you got 'em. Wish I had!'

'I dare say you do, sir. Now, then: how did they come there?'

'Why, your chaps put 'em there. I see 'em just now.'

'No, no; I mean in the sea and on that rock.'

'Come there?' said Ram, with a vacant look.

'Yes, sir! How did they come there? Now, no trifling; out with it at once.'

'Been a wreck, p'r'aps, and they're washed up.'

'Bah!' cried the lieutenant.

Ah, you may say "Bah!" but they might. Why, there was a big ship's boat and a jib-boom washed up here one day; warn't there, Jem?'

'Yes,' growled the rough-looking fellow, half-fisherman half farm-labourer. 'And don't you 'member the big tub o' sugar, as was all soaked with water, till she was like treacle?'

'Ay, and the'—

'That will do—that will do!' cried the lieutenant.

'Washed up, eh? What's in those kegs?'

'I know,' cried Ram, showing his teeth, and looking at Archy. 'Full o' hoysters! Give us one!'

'Come, sir; this won't do for me. You know as well as I do what's in those kegs. Where are the rest?'

'Rest?' said Ram, looking round. 'Are there any more of 'em?'

'Yes, I'll be bound there are. Now, then, out with it, if you want to save your skin.'

'Skin? That's what father said this morning about the cow; but she wasn't drowned.'

'Look here, boy. All this sham innocency won't do for me. Now, then, if you will tell me where the other kegs are, you shall have a reward; if you don't, you'll go to prison as sure as you're there. Jump ashore, two of you, and arrest them before they run.'

Ram turned, and stared at Jemmy Dadd with an ill-used countenance.

'What does he mean, Jemmy?'

The man shook his head.

'Do you know where the other little barrels are?'

'Wish I did,' grumbled Jemmy. 'Say, master, what would you give a man if he showed you where they were?'

'Ten guineas; perhaps twenty,' said the lieutenant eagerly.

'Ten guineas! twenty pounds!' said Jemmy, taking off his red worsted cap, and rubbing his head. 'My! was they your'n? Did you lose 'em?'

'No,' roared the lieutenant; 'it's plain enough, and you know. A cargo has been run here on this ledge. Now, then; it's no use to try and hide it. You know where it

is; so will you gain a reward by giving evidence, or will you go to prison?'

Jemmy shook his head, and gave Ram a puzzled look.

'We came after our cow, sir, please,' said the latter, looking up at the sailor, who stood with a hand upon his arm, while Jemmy did the same.

'Here, boy!' cried the lieutenant. 'You know what a lot of money ten guineas would be?'

'Yes,' said Ram grinning.

'Why, you could buy yourself a watch and chain, and be doing your duty to the king as well. Come, did you see a French boat down here last night?'

'No,' said Ram. 'It was so foggy.'

'You are playing with me, sir. Now then, will you answer?'

'I did answer,' said Ram meekly. 'Didn't I, Jemmy?'

'Jump ashore, you two,' said the lieutenant, 'and have a good search all among those rocks. The cargo's there for certain. You two others,' he continued, 'draw cutlasses, and keep guard over the prisoners.'

His orders were obeyed, and the two men stood by guarding Ram, Jemmy, and the cow, who blinked her eyes and smelt at the sea water from time to time, raised her head and uttered a soft low, which was answered from the green top of the cliff two hundred feet above them, where another cow stood gazing down.

The lieutenant and Archy stood up in the boat watching and directing as Dick and his companion searched about in all directions along the lower ledge, and then managed to climb up to the one twenty feet above, where the next minute Dick gave a shout.

'Hah!' cried the lieutenant joyfully. 'He has found them.'

Ram shut one of his eyes at Jemmy, who made a rumbling noise, but his face did not change.

'What is it, my lad?'

'Cave,' cried Dick.

'What's in it?'

'Lobster pots and old sail. All wore out.'

'Nothing else?'

'No, sir.'

'You go and look.'

The second man disappeared, but returned directly.

'It's on'y a bit of a hole, sir, and there's nothin' else.'

The search was continued and ended, for the ledge was shut in by the mighty wall of rock towering above their heads, and the lieutenant was soon convinced that it was impossible for any one to climb that without tackle from above.

'Come back aboard,' he said. 'You two stop and guard those prisoners.'

The sailors stepped back into the boat and resumed their oars, to row steadily east for about half a mile, past several shallow caves, but they could not see one likely to become a hiding-place for smuggled goods, and the rock rose higher and higher above their heads, precluding all ascent.

The boat was rowed quickly back past where the prisoners sat contentedly enough; save the cow, which kept making the great rock wall echo with her lowings, while three more of her kind now stood on high, gazing down at her plight.

The lieutenant now had himself rowed west for about the same distance, but in this direction they did not pass a crack in the great rock wall, let alone a cave, and once more the gig was rowed back.

'Get back into your boat,' said the little officer sharply.

'Thank ye, sir,' cried Ram. 'Come along, Jemmy. Find your little barrels?'

'Come aboard, my lads,' continued the lieutenant, without replying to the question. 'Make fast her painter to the ring-bolt here.'

This was done, a fresh order given, and, with the rough boat and cow in tow, the gig began to make slowly for the cutter.

Ram bent his head down in the boat.

'Hist, Jemmy!' he whispered.

'Hallo!'

'Shall we jump over and swim ashore?'

'Nay; what's the good?—they'd come arter us, and there's no getting away.'

'I say,' shouted Ram, 'what are you going to do?'

Archy turned to the lieutenant.

'Take no notice. A day or two aboard will make him speak.'

'The cow wants turning out to grass,' shouted Ram; but no heed being paid to his words, 'Oh, very well,' he said, 'I don't care. She'll die, and you'll have to pay for her. I wish my father knew.'

He need not have troubled himself to wish, for Farmer Shackle was lying down, hidden behind some stones on the top of the cliff, watching what was going on, with his brow rugged. He had heard enough of the conversation, after being attracted to the place by the action of his cows, to know that the kegs had been discovered, and he smiled as he made out that his boy and man were quite staunch, and would not say a word.

'Won't get anything out o' them,' he muttered, as he watched the returning boats. 'Shall I tell old Graeme?

No; that would only scare him. They'll land a party, and come and search; but they won't dare to go to the Hoze, so I'll leave the stuff there and chance it.'

Having made up his mind to this, he lay behind the stones watching till he had seen Ram, Jemmy, and the cow on board the cutter and the boats made fast; after which, as he could see that the lieutenant was busy with his glass, he waited his opportunity, got a cow between him and the sea, and then with raised stick began to drive the cattle from the neighbourhood of the precipice, his action seeming perfectly natural, and raising no suspicion in the officer's breast.

Farmer Shackle was quite right, for it was not long before a boat, well filled with men, under the command of the midshipman and the master, put off from the cutter, and began to row west to the little cove, through whose narrow entrance a boat could pass to lie on the surface of a cup-shaped depression, at whose head a limpid stream of water gurgled over the cleanly-washed shingle below the great chalk cliffs.

Shackle saw them go, and, guessing their destination, chuckled; for in their ignorance the search party were going to make a journey of twelve or fourteen miles round each way, when any one accustomed to the place would have made the trip in less than two.

'Well, let 'em go,' said Shackle; 'but if they do find out, I'd better have my two boats out at sea,' and he thought of his luggers lying in the little cup-like cove. 'Nay there's no hurry; people won't be too eager to tell 'em whose boats they are, and I might want to get away.'

He remained thinking about his son for a few minutes and then his countenance lightened.

'Tchah!' he said; 'they won't eat him, and they can't

do anything but keep him. They've found three kegs—that's all. Wish I'd been behind the man who forgot 'em! He wouldn't forget that in a hurry.'

Farmer Shackle went home, and was saluted by the question—

'Found my Tally?'

'Yes, wife.'

'Drowned?'

'No; all right.'

That was sufficient for Mrs. Shackle, who had some butter to make.

Meanwhile the boat containing Archy Raystoke and Gurr the master, with her crew, was rowed steadily along under the cliffs, the deep water being close up. It was a hot day and hard work, but the men pulled away cheerfully, for a run ashore was a change.

The opening into the cove was reached, and the boat run ashore, and one man being left as keeper, the little well-armed party of a dozen men were marched off along the narrow road toward the Hoze.

Archy was in the highest of spirits, and meant to search everywhere in the neighbourhood of the ledge, so as to cover himself with glory in the eyes of his superior officer. Old Gurr the master, who had been turned over to the cutter for two reasons, that he was a good officer and a man with a bad temper, found no pleasure in the walk whatever.

Now he grumbled about his corns, and said he never saw such a road; worse than an old sea beach. Then he limped with the pain of an old wound; and lastly, he forgot all about his troubles in the solace he found in a huge quid of tobacco, with whose juice he plentifully besprinkled the leaves of the brambles that were spread on either side

The men tramped on, exciting the interest of the people of the little villages that were passed—clusters of white rough stone houses by the roadside, whose occupants looked innocence itself, but there was hardly one among them who could not have told tales about busy work on dark nights, carrying kegs and bales, or packages of tobacco from the cliff, to some hiding-place in barn or cave.

Old Gurr knew that, and he winked solemnly at the young midshipman.

'Nice chickens, Mr. Raystoke,' he said.

'Where, Gurr?' cried Archy, who was growing fast, and wanted material to help nature. 'Let's get some eggs to take back.'

'Eggs!' grumbled the weather-beaten officer; 'I didn't mean fowls, I meant people.'

'Oh!'

'Eggs, indeed! Their eggs is kegs o' brandy. Right Nantes; Hollands gin. I know them. They're all in the game. Keep on, my lads. Step together like the sogers do. This here road's not the cutter's deck.'

The last order was not needed, for the men marched on cheerfully and well, till they had passed on the inner side of the high cliff where Ram had displayed his lanthorns, and following the rough road, came at last to the scattered cottages occupied by Shackle's men, and those who had once been servants at the Hoze, before it had sunk down in the world, consequent upon its master's having espoused the wrong side, and its servants were reduced to one old woman.

As they reached the tiny hamlet, a short conference was held between Archy and the master, the latter, in a surly way, giving the lad a few hints as to his proceedings, every suggestion, though, being full of common sense.

'We've no right to go searching their places, Mr. Raystoke, but I shall make a mistake. They won't complain They daren't.'

'Why?'

'Hands are too dirty; if not with this job, with some other.'

So they halted the men, posted one at each end of the little place, so as to command a good view of any one attempting to carry off contraband goods, and went from house to house, the people readily submitting to the intrusion and search, which in each case was without result.

Every one of the cottages being tried, the men were marched down hill after Archy, and stood for a few moments gazing out over the cliff, to where the cutter lay at anchor, with the farmer's boat trailing out astern, and the air so clear that he could even see the cow tethered to a belaying pin, just in front of the mast.

Five minutes after they came upon Fisherman-farmer Shackle himself, leaning over his gate and smoking a pipe, as he apparently contemplated a pig, and wondered whether he ought to make it fatter than it was.

'Mornin', gentlemen,' he said, as Archy and the master came up, and halted their men.

'Good morning,' said Archy shortly. 'Stand aside, please; we must search all your places.'

'Search my places, squire—capt'n, I mean? He aren't here.'

'Who is not here? Are not you the master?'

'Ay, my lad, but I mean him you're searching for. Hi! missus!'

'Yes,' came from within, and Mrs. Shackle appeared wiping her hands.

'Ain't seen a deserter, missus, have you? Capt'n here has lost one of his men.'

'If you'll let me speak, I'll explain,' said Archy sharply. 'A cargo of contraband goods was landed on the rocks below the cliff last night, and'—

'You don't say so, master!' said Shackle earnestly.

'I do say so,' cried Archy; 'and you are suspected of having them concealed here.'

'Me!' cried Shackle, bursting into a roar of laughter. 'Me, Mr. Orficer? Do you know what I am?'

'No.'

'Why, I'm a farmer. Hi, missus, hear him! Young gent here thinks I'm a smuggler. That is a good un, and no mistake.'

Archy was taken aback for the moment, but he caught the eye of the master, who was too old over the business to be easily hoodwinked.

'The young gentleman's made quite a mistake,' said Mrs. Shackle demurely. 'P'r'aps he'd like a mug of our mead before he goes, and his men a drop of home-brewed.'

'Ay, to be sure,' cried Shackle. 'Put out the bread and cheese, missus, and I'll go and draw a drink or two. You'll take something too, won't you, master?'

'Yes; don't mind,' said Gurr, 'but I'd rather take a tot o' right Nantes or Hollands.'

'Ay, so would I,' said Shackle, with a laugh, as his wife began to bustle about and get knives and plates; 'but you've come to the wrong place, master. I have heared o' people getting a drop from 'em, after they've used their horses and carts, but that's never been my luck; has it, missus?'

'No, never,' said Mrs. Shackle; and to herself,—'That's quite true.'

'You are very hospitable,' said Archy shortly; 'but I've got my duty to do, sir. It's an unpleasant one, that we must search your place for contraband goods.'

'Sarch? Oh, I give you my word, squire, there's nothing here.'

'We must see about that.'

'Well, this here arn't werry pleasant, Mr. Orficer, seeing as I'm a reg'lar loyal servant of the king. But theer, I don't mind if my missus don't object. You won't mind, old gal, so long as they don't rip open the beds and chuck the furniture all over the place?'

'I should like to see any of them doing it, that's all,' cried Mrs. Shackle, ruffling up like a great Dorking hen who saw a hawk.

'Nothing about the place shall be injured, madam,' said Archy politely; 'but we must search.'

'Oh, very well then,' said Mrs. Shackle; 'but I must say it's very rude.'

'Pray, forgive us,' said Archy, raising his hat; 'we are His Majesty's servants, and we do it in the king's name.'

Mrs. Shackle responded with her best curtsey, and a smile came back in her face as the farmer said,—

'It's all right, missus; they're obliged to do it. Where will you begin first—what are you sarching for?'

'Brandy,' said Archy.

'Oh, then, down in the cellar's the place,' said Shackle, laughing, and taking three mugs from where his wife had placed them. 'If it had been for silks and laces, I should have said go upstairs.'

He led the way to a door at the top of some stone steps.

'One moment,' said Archy, and, giving orders to the

men to separate, surround the premises, and search the outbuildings, then stationing two more at the doors, and taking one, Gurr, to search upstairs, he followed the farmer into a fairly spacious stone cellar, where there was a cider barrel in company with two of ale, and little kegs of elder wine and mead.

'Sarch away, squire,' said Shackle bluffly, as he placed the mugs on the floor and turned the wooden spigots.

'That's elder wine in the little barrel. Say, you haven't seen anything of a boy of mine in your travels? My lad and one of the men have gone after a stray cow. I'm fear'd she's gone over the cliff.'

'They're all on board the cutter.'

'What? Well, that is good news. Full up here. Done sarching, sir?'

'Yes,' replied Archy, who began to feel more and more ashamed of being suspicious of so frank and bluffly hospitable a man.

'Come along then. Your lads will be as pleased as can be with a mug of my home-brewed.'

As he led the way to the door the midshipman gave another glance round, seeing nothing in the slightest degree suspicious, and, a few minutes after, the whole party was being refreshed, both officers quite convinced that there was nothing contraband on the premises.

'What other houses are there near here?' asked Gurr at last.

'Only one. The Hoze.

'The Hoze?'

'Yes; Sir Risdon Graeme's. Yonder among the trees. Going up there?'

'Yes, of course,' said Archy shortly.

Yes, of course,' said the farmer, in assent. 'But I'd be

a bit easy with him, sir. Don't hurt his feelings. Gentleman, you see.'

'Don't be alarmed,' said the midshipman quietly. 'I hope we shall not be rude to any one.'

He moved towards the door, after saluting Mrs. Shackle, the farmer leading the way, and pointing out the nearest path up the steep slope.

''Bout my cow,' he said.

'I have no doubt that as soon as the lieutenant in command is satisfied that you had nothing to do with the smuggling, your people will be set at liberty.'

'And the cow?'

'And the cow of course.'

'Thank ye, sir; that's good news. I'll go and tell the missus. Straight on, sir; you can't miss it.'

'Ah, my fine fellow,' he continued, as he walked back, 'if it hadn't been for your gang with you, how easily I could have turned the key and kept you down in that cellar, where I wish I had your skipper too.'

'Oh, Blenheim!' said his wife, in an excited whisper, 'how could you help them to go up to the Hoze? They'll find out everything now.'

'P'r'aps not, missus. I sent 'em, because if I hadn't they'd have found the way. We may get off yet, and if we do—well, it won't be the first time; so, here's to luck.'

As he spoke he opened a corner cupboard, took out a bottle of spirits which had never paid duty, poured out and drank a glass.

'Thank you,' said a gruff voice. 'I think, if you don't mind, farmer, I'll have a little taste of that. I came back to tell you that your cider is rather harsh and hard, not to say sour, and I'm a man accustomed to rum.'

As he spoke, Gurr the master stepped into the room,

took the bottle from the farmer's hand, helped himself to a glass, and poured out and smelt the spirit.

'I say, farmer,' he said, as he tasted, 'this is the right sort or the wrong sort, according to which side you are.'

'Only a little drop given me by a friend.'

'French friend, for any money,' said the master, drinking the glass. 'Yes, that's right Nantes. I thought so from the first, farmer, and I know now I was right.'

He went off again, and Shackle stood shaking his fist after him.

'And we'd got off so well,' he muttered. 'I knew that rascal suspected us.'

'Say me, Blenheim,' retorted Mrs. Shackle. 'I've begged you hundreds of times not to meddle with the business, but you would, and I'm your wife and obliged to obey. Isn't Ram a long time bringing home that cow?'

'Yes,' said Shackle drily. 'Very.'

CHAPTER VIII.

ARCHY was some little distance ahead of his men, and he had just stepped into the patch of woodland which surrounded the Hoze, when he heard a pleasant little voice singing a snatch of a Jacobite song.

He stopped short to listen, it sounded so bird-like and sweet, and half-laughingly he sang the last line over aloud, thinking the while how disloyal he was.

Hardly had he finished, when there was a burst of barking, a rush, and a dog came hurrying toward him, followed by a voice crying—

'Grip, Grip, come here!'

The dog seemed to pay no heed to the call, and at a turn of the track, Archy saw him coming open-mouthed.

It was not a pleasant sight, and the youth felt disposed to take to his heels, and run for protection to his men.

But there were drawbacks to such a proceeding.

If he ran it would look cowardly, and he knew for certain that the dog would come after him, and take him at a disadvantage; so, making a virtue of necessity, he whipped out his dirk and ran hard at the dog, who checked his pace, hesitated, stopped, barked more furi-

ously than ever, and then turned round, and was chased by the midshipman, who drew up on finding himself face to face with Sir Risdon's daughter, out for her daily walk.

The girl turned white, and was in the act of turning to run away, when Archy's words arrested her.

'No, no,' he cried, 'don't run away.'

She stopped, and looked from his face to his dirk, and back.

'Oh, I see,' he said, 'that alarmed you. There,' he continued, sheathing the little weapon, 'I only drew it because your dog looked so fierce. Does he bite?'

'Sometimes, I'm afraid. But were you coming to see my father? Who are you?' she added uneasily, as she glanced at the lad's uniform.

'I am Archibald Raystoke, of His Majesty's cutter *White Hawk*.'

'And you want to see my father?' cried the girl, beginning to tremble.

'Well, yes, I ought to see him. The fact is, we have landed to search for a quantity of smuggled things, and to make a capture of the smugglers if we can.'

Celia looked at him wildly, and her face grew more and more white.

'Will you show me the way to the house? The Hoze you call it, do you not?'

Celia gave a quick, almost imperceptible nod, as she recalled how she had lain in her clothes, and listened to the busy coming and going of footsteps, for the greater part of the night.

As all this came to her mind, she felt at first as if she must run to warn her father. Then a giddy feeling of dread came over her, and she stood staring blankly at the frank-looking boy before her.

'I know the great vault is full of smuggled things,' she said to herself, 'and that they will think my father put them there. What shall I do?'

'Poor little lassie!' said Archy to himself, as he smiled complacently; 'she has never seen an officer in uniform before, and I frightened her with my drawn sword.'

At that moment, Gurr came up with the men, and Celia seemed as if turned to stone.

'This young lady lives at the house, Mr. Gurr,' said Archy aloud, 'and she will show us the way.'

Poor Celia felt as if she could neither move nor speak. It seemed horrible to her that she should have the task of guiding the king's men, perhaps to arrest her father. But just then she was brought to herself by the behaviour of the dog, who, on seeing his mistress talking in a friendly way to the stranger who had chased him, had condescended to be quiet, but now that a fresh party of the enemy was approaching, set up his bristles, and began to bark and growl furiously.

'Down, Grip! Quiet!' she cried, and feeling bound to act, she went on, with the midshipman keeping close up, and putting in an apologetic word about giving her so much trouble.

Celia could hardly keep down a hysterical cry, as she caught sight of her father and mother, the latter with her hand upon the former's arm. They had been taking their customary walk in the neglected garden, and Sir Risdon was about to lead his pale, careworn lady up the steps, when the snarling and subdued barking of Grip made him turn his head, and he stopped short with his lips almost white.

'What is it?' whispered Lady Graeme, as she saw the uniforms and weapons of the men.



"ARCHY RAISED HIS HAT."

'The end!' said the unhappy man, as he looked wildly at his wife. 'The result of my weakness. They are on the scent of the smuggled goods, and I am to be called to account for their possession. Better that we had starved!'

Lady Graeme caught his hand, and pressed it hard.

'Be firm,' she whispered; 'you will betray yourself.'

'Well,' he replied bitterly, 'why not? Better so than being the slave of that wretched man. I feel that I am worse than he. I do know better, he does not.'

Recalling that he was in the presence of a gentleman, Archy raised his hat, advanced and said, apologetically, who and what they were. That his was a very unpleasant duty, but that as a gentleman, Sir Risdon would see that the king's officers had no alternative but to carry out their duty.

'Of course not, sir,' said Sir Risdon. 'I understand, sir, you wish to search. Very well, I shall raise no objection. Proceed.'

'Shall we close the men all round the house?' said the master, coming up after halting the men.

'Wait a minute,' replied Archy. 'Really, I hardly think it is necessary for us to commit so serious an act of rudeness towards a gentleman. Perhaps Sir Risdon Graeme will be good enough to assure me.'

'No, sir,' said the baronet sternly; 'I shall make no obstacle. You have your duty to do; pray proceed.'

The midshipman hesitated, and looked from one to the other, seeing Lady Graeme standing pale, handsome, and statuesque by her husband's side, while on the other side was Celia, holding her father's hand, and resting her forehead against his arm.

'I won't do it, I can't,' thought Archy. 'Why didn't

he say out at once he had no knowledge of the affair, and send us about our business?'

At that moment, he felt his sleeve plucked, and turning angrily round, he saw the elderly master, who had been standing hat in hand, greatly impressed by Lady Graeme's dignity.

'We're on the wrong tack, Mr. Raystoke, sir,' he whispered.

'Think so, Gurr?' said Archy joyfully.

'Oh, yes! These are not the sort o' folk to do that kind o' thing. Apologise, and I'll give the order to march. It goes through me like a knife.'

Archy drew a long breath, and was about to retire his men, when he heard something which made him bound forward, for Celia, unable to bear the horror and alarm any longer had suddenly swooned away.

The midshipman was too late, for Sir Risdon had bent down, raised his child, and was about to carry her into the house.

He turned fiercely on the young officer.

'Well, sir,' he said sternly, 'you have your duty to do; pray go on, and then relieve my wife and child of the presence of your men.'

'I beg your pardon, Sir Risdon,' said Archy quickly. 'No one could regret this more than I do. You see I am only a young officer, quite a boy, and was sent on this unpleasant duty.

'Go on, sir, go on!'

'Oh, no!' cried the lad; 'I am unwilling to search the place. I'm sure if our lieutenant knew he would not wish it for a moment.'

The baronet gazed at the boy wildly, as he clasped his child to his breast.

'You—you are not going to search?' he said hesitatingly.

No, of course not. Pray forgive me. I'll lead my men back to the boat at once.'

He raised his hat to Lady Graeme, an example followed by the master clumsily, as he backed away to the men, whom he faced round, the order was given, and they began to march back.

As they disappeared among the trees, Sir Risdon stooped down and kissed his child's forehead passionately.

'Wife,' he said, in a deep, husky voice, 'I never felt the misery and degradation of my position so cruelly before. Take her up to her room.'

'What are you going to do, Risdon?' exclaimed the lady.

'Follow that poor lad, and let him know the truth. I will not let him fail in his duty, to rescue that old scoundrel down below.'

'No, no! You must not. It would be too cruel,' whispered Lady Graeme wildly. 'Think of the consequences.'

'I do,' said Sir Risdon sternly. 'I should have behaved like what I have a right to be called—a gentleman.'

'And make our fortunes ten times worse. You would be torn from us. What are poverty and disgrace to that?'

'You are cruel,' said Sir Risdon bitterly. 'I must, woman; I tell you I must. If this poor child should ever know into what a pit I have allowed myself to be led, how can I ever look her in the face again?'

'It would kill her for you to be taken away, to be punished, perhaps, for that which you could hardly help.'

'No, she would soon forget.'

'And I should soon forget?' said Lady Graeme reproachfully.

Sir Risdon turned to her wildly, as she laid her head upon his breast.

'If you were taken from us, it would kill me too,' she said tenderly; and then in silence, they bore their insensible child into the forbidding-looking house.

CHAPTER IX.

'THINK we've done right, my lad?' said Gurr, after they had half way descended the slope.

'Yes, of course. How could we search the house of a gentleman like that?'

'Oh, easy enough.'

'It was impossible.'

'But suppose, after all, he has got all the stuff hid away. Some men's very artful, as you'll find out some day. Oughtn't we to go back?'

He paused as he said these words, and then laid his hand firmly on Archy's shoulder.

'I didn't tell you,' he said, 'what I saw when I went back to the farm.'

'No! What?' cried the midshipman eagerly.

'That old chap having a glass of real smuggled spirits.'

'How do you know it was?'

'Because I tasted it. No mistake about that, I can tell you. Then he was very eager to get me to go up yonder, and that looks bad. He knows all about it.'

'Nonsense! If he knew that the smuggled goods were up there he wouldn't send us to find them.'

'How do you know? That may have been his artfulness, to keep us from searching. If he'd as good as said

don't go up there, and tried to stop us, we should have gone at once.'

'But we can't go back and search, Gurr. Suppose we did go and ransacked the place, and hurt everybody's feelings, and then found nothing, what should we look like then?'

'Silly,' said the master laconically, and for a time he was silent, marching on behind the men. 'All comes of being sent on such dooty,' he burst out with. 'It isn't right to send gentlemen and officers to do such dirty work. I've been ashamed of myself ever since I've been on the cutter. Hallo! Here's the farmer again.'

For they had suddenly come upon Shackle driving an old grey horse before him as if going on some farming business, and he started apparently from a fit of musing as he came abreast.

'Ah, gentlemen,' he said; 'going back?'

'Yes,' said Gurr smartly.

'Found the stuff?'

'No.'

'I say.'

'Well?'

'Are you sure there was anything landed there last night?'

'Of course we are.'

'Oh, I didn't know. Good day, gentlemen, good day.'

He went on after his horse chuckling to himself, while the search party made for the track to get back to the cove and row back.

But before they were half way there, Archy who had been thinking deeply, suddenly said to Gurr—

'I say, though, isn't he right?'

'What about, my lad?'

Are we sure that a cargo was landed last night?'

'Didn't you and the skipper find three kegs?'

'Yes, but they might have been there a month ago.'

'Why, of course, my lad. Here, let's go and tell the skipper so. How I do hate being sent upon a wild goose chase like this!'

The rest of the journey to the cove was performed almost in silence; they then embarked, heartily tired with their walk, and ready enough to take the rest of the burden of their journey on their hands and arms by rowing steadily and well, the tide being in their favour.

'Yes, I do hate these jobs,' said the master after a long silence. 'See that the people was nodding and winking to one another as we went by their cottages?'

'Yes, I did see something of the kind once or twice,' replied Archy.

'Laughing at us, and knowing we should find out nothing, while they knew all the time.'

The first thing plainly visible as the boat approached the cutter was the head of Tally gazing contemplatively at them over the side, as if anxious to know what news there was from home, and directly after Ram and Jemmy looked over in a quiet stolid way, as if not troubled in the least by the fact that they were prisoners.

'Well, Mr. Raystoke,' cried the lieutenant, as the young midshipman sprang over the side; 'found the cargo and left two men in charge, eh?'

'No, sir.'

'Tut—tut—tut! What is the use of having you for my first officer. You ought to have searched everywhere, and found it.'

'We did search everywhere, sir, nearly, but didn't find it.'

'Oh! What's that? Nearly? Then where didn't you search?'

Archy told him and his reasons.

'Humph! Ha! Well, I don't know: Government has no bowels of compassion, Mr. Raystoke. I'm afraid you ought to have searched the Gloves.'

'Hoze, sir, Hoze.'

'Oh well, gloves, hose, gloves, all the same; only one's for downstairs, the other up. Stupid name for a place.

'You think, then, I haven't done my duty, sir.'

'Yes, Mr. Raystoke, as an officer I do; but as a gentleman I'm afraid I think I should have done just the same.'

'I'm very sorry, sir. I wanted to do what is right.'

'And you let your amiability step in the way, sir. That cargo must be run to earth.'

'But is it quite certain, sir, that there was a cargo run?'

'My good fellow,' cried the little lieutenant impatiently, 'if you found a skin lying on the beach, wouldn't you feel sure that it had once had a sheep in it?'

'Yes, sir, if it was a sheepskin.'

'Bah! don't try to chop logic here; go below and get something to eat, while I make up my mind what I shall do.'

Archy went into the cabin, not at all satisfied with the result of his run ashore, and he did not feel much better after his meal, when he went on deck just in time to find the lieutenant laying down the law to Ram and Jemmy Dadd.

'There,' he was saying, 'take your cow and go ashore. I'm not going to keep you prisoners, but the eye of the law is upon you, and this smuggling will be brought home to you both. Be off!'

'Shan't Jemmy milk the cow again before we go?' said Ram, with a grin, that might have been friendly or mocking.

'No!' thundered the lieutenant. 'Here, Mr. Gurr, see these smuggling scoundrels off the deck.'

This was soon done, the cow being easily got into the boat, and just as it was growing dark Ram stood up to push from the side.

'I say,' he cried again, addressing Archy, 'is that thing sharp?'

The midshipman did not condescend to answer, but stood gazing thoughtfully over the side, till the boat gradually seemed to die away in the faint mist of the coming night.

'Well, Raystoke, what are you thinking?' said a voice behind him, and he started round.

'I was just thinking of coming to you, sir.'

'Eh, what for?'

'It seems to me, sir, that if that cargo was run, and is hidden anywhere near, they'll be moving it to-night.'

'Of course. Raystoke, you'll be a great man some day. I shouldn't have thought of that. Well, what do you propose?'

'To go ashore, and watch.'

'Of course. My dear boy, if you can help me to capture a few of these wretched people, I shall get promoted to a better ship, and you shall come with me. I won't rest till I am post-captain, and as soon as you can pass, you shall be my lieutenant. There, select your crew and be off at once.'

'No, sir; that will not do. They'll be on the watch, and if they see a boat's crew land, they'll do nothing to-night.'

'Then what do you propose?'

'Don't laugh at me, sir, and call me stupid; but I've been thinking that if I could be set ashore, dressed as one of the boys, I might go about unnoticed. And if they were moving the cargo, I could see where they took it, and then you could land the men.'

'Oh, you'll be an admiral before I shall, boy. That's it; but will you do it?'

'If you'll let me, sir.'

'Let you? Here, Mr. Gurr, help Mr. Raystoke, and—stop though; I don't think I can let you go alone, my lad.'

'If I don't go alone, sir, it's of no use.'

'You are right. Then we'll risk it; but if the smugglers kill you, don't come and blame me. Have the boat ready, Mr. Gurr. Here, Raystoke, come down into the cabin at once.

CHAPTER X.

HALF an hour after, a dirty-looking sailor lad slipped down into the boat, with his worsted cap pulled well down over his eyes, and an uncomfortable feeling about his chest, as he sat back in the stern sheets by Gurr the master.

'Lay your backs well into it, my lads,' said the lieutenant, 'and try and land him without being seen.'

'Ay, ay, sir!' came from the men, the boat began to surge through the still water, and the boy tried to shift the lion's head which formed the top of his dirk handle.

This he had placed inside the breast of his woollen shirt, ready for use if wanted, but it promised to hurt him more than any enemy, and he wished he had left it on board.

'No talking, lads,' said the master, 'and don't splash.'

The oars had been muffled, and they glided along through the faint mist, in a ghostly way, well in the shadow of the cliffs, Gurr keeping up a whispered conversation with the lad by his side.

'It's no use to ask you 'bout where you are going first, sir,' whispered the master, 'because I suppose it will all be chance. But you'll go up to the farm, eh?'

'Yes, I shall go there.'

'And up to that big house?'

Archy was silent.

'Ah, well; it's your plan, and you must do what you think's best, only take care of yourself, and if they're after you, don't make for the sea, that's where they'll think you would go. Make inland for the woods, and hide there.'

Archy nodded, and no more was said during the dark journey. They were so close to the huge wall of rocks that it seemed as if they were alive with strange marine creatures, which kept on writhing and whispering together, and making gasping and sucking noises, as the tide heaved and sank among the loose rocks and seaweed, while Archy could not divest himself of the idea that they were watched by people keeping pace with them higher up on the top of the cliff.'

'Wonder whether those two have landed the cow by this time?' whispered Gurr, breaking in upon one of Archy's reveries, in which he saw himself following a band of smugglers laden with contraband goods.

'I don't know,' he replied. 'We must take care they do not see us.'

'Not likely on a dark night like this. Won't be so foggy, though, as 'twas last.'

Nothing was seen or heard of the late prisoners' boat, and for very good reasons; and at last they found themselves abreast of the opening into the cove, where they lay upon their oars for a time listening.

All was still. Not a sound to be heard on either of the luggers lying at their buoys, and no light was visible at the cottages at the head of the little bay.

'I might venture now,' whispered Archy. 'Have me rowed close in to the shingle beach on the right, not close ashore, but so that I can wade in. I shall drop over the

side where it's about two feet deep. Let them back in and we can try the depth with the boat-hook.'

The order was whispered, the boat glided in through the broad opening, was turned quickly, and then the men backed water till told to stop, Archy, who had the boat-hook over the side, suddenly finding it touch the shingly bottom at the depth of about a foot.

'Good-bye,' he whispered, and, gliding over the side, he softly waded ashore and stood on the beach.

It looked light in front, where the limestone rocks had given place to chalk, but to right, left, and seaward, all was black as night, and stepping cautiously along, the lad approached the cottages, listening attentively, but not hearing a sound save the gurgling of water as it trickled under the stones on its way to the sea.

As he reached the track leading past the cottages he had a narrow escape from falling over a boat that was drawn up on the stones, but he saved himself with a jerk, and, feeling hot with the sudden start, he turned and crouched down, but there was not a sound to indicate that he had been heard, and drawing a long breath he stepped on to reach the hard earth where his feet were not among the water-worn pebbles, and in a few minutes he was on the road he had traversed twice that day, and walking fast toward the farm.

Once or twice he hesitated, for the way lay so low down in the valley, with the hills towering up to such a height on either side, that the night seemed as dark as during the fog of the previous night; but he got along over the ground pretty well in spite of its seeming more hilly and rough, till at the end of about an hour and a half he felt that he must be approaching the farm, and he advanced more cautiously, listening for footsteps and voices from time to time.

There was a good broad green marge to the lane about here, and he stepped on to it, the turf deadening his footsteps.

'But I don't recollect seeing this grass in the morning,' he thought; and then he stopped short, for it suddenly occurred to him that he had not come upon the cluster of houses where the people smiled and nodded at one another as they passed.

'I can't have trailed off into another road, can I?' he said to himself, as he felt quite startled and turned hot.

He looked round, but it was too dark to make out anything, and he was about to start on again, comforting himself with the idea that he must be right, when he heard at a distance the *pat-pat* of feet on hard ground, and drew back close up to the side to stoop down among some brambles, which told him at once after their fashion what they were.

'If I only dared ask whoever this is,' thought Archy, 'I should do.'

His thoughts took another direction directly, for, apparently about twenty yards away, he heard some one sneeze, and then mutter impatiently, followed by another sneeze.

And all the while the regular *pat-pat* of footsteps came from his right, but not as he had come, for the sound was as if some one was approaching by a road which came at right angles to the one he was in.

Archy crouched there, breathless and listening, wondering who the man could be who was perfectly silent now, but he had not moved away unless the turf had silenced his footprints.

'How lucky it was I stopped!' thought the midshipman 'I should have walked right on to him and been caught.'

The steps came nearer, and at last it seemed as if they were going to pass on, when a gruff voice from close by said,—

'Well, lad?'

There was a sudden stoppage, and an exclamation, and—

'Made me jump, master.'

'Don't talk foolery,' said the first voice in impatient tones, and to Archy it was unmistakable. He had heard both voices before. 'What have you made out?'

'Nothing.'

'No boat landed?'

'Nor no sign o' one, master. Both lads swear as no one has passed along the lane.'

'Wouldn't take the upper lane, would they?'

'Not likely.'

'Upper lane!' thought Archy. Had he taken the upper lane in the darkness, and so missed the men on the watch?

'Didn't hear the sailors say nothing on the cutter, did you?'

'Not a word.'

The middy's heart seemed to give a throb. He did know that voice then. It was that of the man who had been detained with the boy, and this other, he was sure, was the voice of the farmer.

'Going to keep on watching?'

'Of course. They'll be up to some game to trap us safe. Ought to get that stuff away.'

'No, I wouldn't, master; it's safe enough now.'

'You're a fool,' came back in a savage growl. 'Any body but you and that mole-eyed boy would have seen the kegs before them sailors.'

'Did see 'em—when it was too late,' grumbled the other.

'Well, go back; and take off them boots, and hang 'em round your neck. I could hear you a mile away.'

'Right.'

'Go and tell 'em to keep a sharp look-out in the cove, and then to run the moment a boat comes in sight.'

'No boat won't come in sight to-night. Dark.'

'Then the moment you hear one.'

'They won't come to-night, master.'

'Go and do as I tell you,' said the other savagely.

'It's the farmer and his man,' thought the listener; 'and there is something wrong.'

He wondered what he had better do. Should he give notice to them on the cutter?

The answer came at once. How could he? He had made no plans for that.

'Off you go,' was said roughly, and the rustling sound seemed to indicate that the man had gone back toward the cove.

Archy listened patiently for the next movement of the farmer, but he could detect nothing, and he was feeling sure that the man was still watching and listening, when he heard a sneeze at a distance followed by a muttering sound, and knew that he must have moved off.

Without a moment's hesitation the lad followed, keeping along the grassy marge of the road, and listening intently to make out at last the dull sound of steps, which told that the man who made them was walking barefoot.

As far as he could judge now, Archy was in the proper road, and as he walked along he tried to understand what was going on, coming at last to the conclusion at which he had at first jumped, that something would be done

that night if the farmer and his people were certain that they would not be disturbed.

As he thought he walked cautiously on, wondering what he had better do, and seeing at last a bright light in front high up a slope, and another away to his right much higher.

A little consideration told him that the first was at the farm; the other high up, facing toward the sea, must be up at the Hoze.

Trusting more to chance than plan, the midshipman went on and on, following Farmer Shackle; the task becoming easy now, for as he neared the lights the man grew more careless, so that it was easy to trace his movements, which were evidently homeward, till a few minutes later Archy saw him pass the glowing window, swing open a door from which came a burst of light, pass in, and the door was closed.

Archy stood outside with a vague belief that before long the man would come out, and perhaps go to the spot where the cargo was hidden.

As he waited he could not help turning his eyes in the direction of the long, solitary house in the patch of woodland, and found himself wondering whether he should ever go up there again.

After waiting about a quarter of an hour outside the farm, with his back against one of the roughly piled up stone walls of the district, Archy began to think it was very dull, and his expectations of a discovery or an adventure grew less and less. All was very quiet at the farm, so quiet that he determined at last to go and peer in at the window to see if the farmer was likely to come out again, because if this were not so he was wasting his time

'But they are not likely to do anything without him,' he thought.

Advancing cautiously, he entered the garden, and was just going up to the window, when the door was thrown open, and he dropped down behind a bush as the farmer strode out.

'He must see me,' thought Archy. 'What a position for an officer to be in!'



'Eh?' exclaimed Shackle, turning sharply round, as if to answer his wife. 'Oh yes. Ought to have been here by now.'

This gave the midshipman a moment's breathing time; and he had drawn himself up behind the bush by the time the farmer had closed the door, the sudden change from darkness to light preventing Shackle from seeing the spy upon his proceedings.

Just as he was passing he stopped short, uttering an ejaculation; and feeling that he was seen, the midshipman was about to leap up, jump over the low wall, and run, when he heard steps.

He lay still, hoping that this might have drawn forth the exclamation, but for the next few moments he was in agony.

Then came relief.

'That you, Ramillies?'

'Yes, father.'

'Well?'

'I think it's all right. Carts are coming, and all the lads are down the roads.'

'All?'

'No. Two of 'em's down by the cove, but they won't send anybody from the cutter to-night.'

'Not so sure of it, my boy,—not so sure. Can't be too careful. 'Tain't as if we were obliged to move 'em to-night. Landing a cargo's one thing; getting it away another. Well, we'll try. You're sure they're keeping good watch at the cove?'

'Yes, father.'

'What sort of an officer did he seem on the cutter?'

'Little, fat, sleepy chap.'

'And the others?'

'Don't seem to be no others, only that cocky-hoopy middy, who came ashore with the men. I should like to ketch him ashore some day.'

One of Archy's legs gave a twitch at the first remark about him, and the twitch occurred in his right arm at the second.

'Don't chatter. Not very sharp sort of officer, eh?'

'No, father. Sort of chap who'd go to sleep all night.'

Archy began wondering. He had thought the boy a dull, stupid-looking bumpkin, and he was finding out how observing he had been.

'Well, we'll risk it, boy. Come along.'

Archy's heart gave a bound.

Here was news! He had been growing dull and disheartened, thinking that his expedition was foolish and impossible, and here at once he had learned what he wanted. He knew that now all he had to do was to take advantage of every wall and tree, even to creep along the ground if necessary, and he would be able to follow the smugglers to the place where they had hidden the run cargo, watch them bring it out, and then track them to the fresh hiding-place.

He would thus learn everything, and be able at daybreak to make his way to the cliff, signal for a boat, and a grand capture would be made.

His heart beat high as he thought of the lieutenant's delight, and of the joy there would be amongst the men, for this would mean prize money, and perhaps the means of deluding the vessel that had brought the cargo into a trap, so that it could be captured, and more prize-money as well as honour be the result.

It did not take him long to think all this; and then he rose cautiously and dropped down again, for the door was re-opened, and the light beamed out so that the watcher felt that he must be seen.

'That my Rammy?' cried Mrs. Shackle.

'Yes,' growled the farmer; 'keep that door shut and your mouth too.'

'But do be careful, master. I don't want him took prisoner again.'

It's all right, mother.'

'Come along, boy.'

Archy heard the departing steps, and began to suffer a fresh agony of suspense. He could not stir, for the farmer's wife stood at the open door, and the slightest movement would have caused a discovery; and all the time he could hear the footsteps growing more and more faint.

'Oh!' he said to himself; 'and it's so dark I shan't be able to tell which way they have gone.'

What should he do? Start up and run?

If he did the woman was certain to raise an alarm; and, knowing that, he could do nothing but wait till she went in, when he might chance to pick up the clue again.

His heart beat so loudly that he felt as if it must be heard, but Mrs. Shackle was too intent upon listening to the departing footsteps, which grew more faint till they died out entirely, and as they passed away the midshipman's heart sank.

'Had all my trouble for nothing,' he thought. 'So near success, and yet to fail!'

'Ah, deary deary me!' said a voice from close at hand. 'I'm very sick and tired of it all. I wish he'd be content with his cows and sheep.'

Mrs. Shackle drew back as she said this, the door closed, and Archy sprang up, darted out of the gateway, and hurried along the path as fast as the darkness would allow, stopping from time to time to listen.

For a long time he could hear nothing. He was descending the slope toward the road leading to the cove, as far as he could tell, for it seemed to him likely that the farmer and his son had gone in that direction; but as he went on and on, and was unable to detect a sound, he felt that he must be wrong, and stopped short, listening intently.

'Bother the woman!' he thought; 'it's all through her. They'll go and get all the cargo from the hiding-place, and take it somewhere, and I shall know nothing.'

He bit his lip with disappointment, and gave an angry stamp on the grass.

'I'll go back, and try some other way.'

Easy to determine, but hard to carry out in the darkness, and in a place which seemed quite changed at night. There should be a lane or track leading down to the cliff he knew, but where it was he could not say; in fact, at that moment, in his confusion, he could hardly tell for certain that he was on the road leading right away to the cove.

'I may just as well be moving,' he said at last despondently. 'Oh, if I could only have followed them up!'

His heart gave a bound just then, for plainly on the night air came a dull sound, as of footsteps on grass. Then there was a whisper, and directly after he knew that a number of people were coming quickly toward him.

A moment or two later he heard a rattling noise, which he recognised as that made by a horse shaking his harness, and once more Archy's heart beat high.

There had not been time for them — if those people coming were the smugglers—to fetch the cargo, and they must be coming in his direction.

'What shall I do?' thought the watcher; 'lie down and let them pass, or go on?'

He decided on the latter course, and finding that he was in a lane bounded by stone walls, he went on, pausing from time to time to make sure that he was being followed.

This proved to be the case, the people getting nearer and nearer, and it was a curious experience to hear the

whispering of voices and trampling of feet coming out of the darkness.

'Walking on the side turf,' said Archy to himself, as he kept on, to find after a few minutes that the stone wall on his left had ceased, but he could feel that the road went on, and heard the people coming.

A minute or two later he realised that he was going up hill; then the slope grew steeper, and he paused again to listen.

He was quite right. They were coming on steadily, and he knew that there must be twenty or thirty people; but he could hear no horses now.

'They've stopped at the foot of this steep place,' he thought, as he went on and on, the people still advancing fast, and all at once, as he went on, a sudden thought ran through him like a stab. For he had guessed at least the direction in which he was going in the black darkness; he was once more ascending the slope toward the patch of woodland high up the hill, and the place of deposit of the smuggled goods must be the Hoze.

CHAPTER XI.

A FEELING of misery that he could not have explained came over Archy Raystoke as he grasped the position, and he wished that he had never undertaken the task he had in hand.

For it seemed so shocking that the noble-looking lady and gentleman he had seen that day should be in league with a gang of smugglers, and have lent their out-of-the-way house to be a depository for the contraband goods.

'Oh, it's impossible,' he said to himself. 'They could not. The scoundrels have hidden the things somewhere up in the wood by the house, thinking that nobody would come in there to search.'

'The artful rascal!' said Archy to himself, feeling better now that he had put this interpretation upon the proceedings; and, knowing his way better now, and thinking of the dog the while, he hurried on, and had nearly reached the house, meaning to hide somewhere among the abundant shrubs which surrounded it till the smugglers had passed, when all doubt as to the party being those he was tracking was chased away by his hearing a voice just before him say,—

'All right, father. Here they come.'

Archy stopped short, as he felt his position. The farmer

and his son had come up here, and were waiting for the men to act as carriers.

'What shall I do?' he asked himself, for he was between two parties, and a step might mean discovery. In fact, if the last speaker had taken a step forward, he must have detected the spy's presence.

There was no time for thought. Archy stood for a moment or two as if paralysed; then, as he heard the farmer's gruff voice, he dropped down, and began to crawl among the bushes.

'Been a long time coming; here, go in and get the lanthorns now.'

At that moment Archy was brought up by a wall, over which he passed his hands, to find that he was directly after touching iron bars close to the ground.

It was some building, and then, as he crouched there, he was conscious of a peculiar odour, which told him not only that this was a cellar, but one in which brandy was stored.

Again he felt a strange sensation of misery. He had accidentally hit upon the place where the cargo had been hidden, and it must be in the cellar of the Hoze, and not in the wood.

He wished he had not made the discovery now, and felt ready to retreat, for it would be horrible to have to tell the lieutenant, giving him such information as would lead to the arrest of the tall, careworn man who had impressed him so strangely that day.

All at once he was conscious of a gleam of light, following a faint noise, and right before him he saw the fluttering blue flame of a brimstone match, which blue began to turn yellow and illumine the face of the boy who had been a prisoner, and two great stacks of kegs and

bales, reaching nearly from floor to ceiling of a low vault.

The light shone out through the grated window, by which he was on hands and knees, and feeling that he would be at once recognised if his face was seen, he crept on under the wall a few yards, and lay flat listening, as he wished that there was time for him to get down to the cliff, and signal for help, to capture the smugglers and their store.

An impossibility, he knew, for the cargo might be all gone long before he could reach the cutter, even if a boat were waiting; beside which, he felt that he did not want to tell all he had seen, for if he did, what would follow with respect to those he had spoken with that day?

'Now, my lads, in with you,' cried a familiar voice. Load up carefully when you get down to the carts, and we shall get all snug before daylight.'

A murmur of acquiescence followed, and they began to tramp very close to where the midshipman lay, expecting every moment to be seen.

He crouched down as low as he could, not daring to raise even his head, and wondering whether the bright hilt of his dirk would show, and he thrust it farther into his breast. Then he wondered whether he could back softly away; but that was impossible, for the light came from behind him, through the grated window, while escape forward was impossible, as he was close to a door through which shadowy forms were passing in.

There was nothing for it but to lie still, and trust to his not being seen, when the next minutes were made agreeable by a host of recollections regarding the treatment received by those who betrayed smugglers, of the desperate fights there had been, how many had been

killed, and a shudder ran through the lad as he recalled the story of a man who had played the spy, somewhere about the south coast, being thrown from a cliff, and literally smashed.

'They'll see me, I know they'll see me,' thought Archy; 'but I'm a king's officer, young as I am, and I'll show them that I can fight for my life like a man.'

As this thought struck him, his hand went involuntarily to his side to get a good grip of and draw his dirk.

The movement betrayed him, for, before he could quite realise that his dirk was hidden in his breast, he was seized by two great muscular hands, dragged into a standing position, and he could dimly see a face peering into his, as a voice, which he recognised as the farmer's, growled savagely—

'Who's this?'

Before he could struggle or answer, the man went on fiercely—

'Why, you lazy, shuffling, young villain! sit there and skulk, while the others do the work, would you? Come on!'

Before the midshipman could recover from his surprise, he felt himself run forward by the two hands which had been dropped on his shoulders, thrust through the door, the farmer whispering savagely, 'Work, or I'll break your neck;' and giving him a fierce push and a kick, which drove him along a passage, where on his left was the open doorway into the dimly lit cellar.

So great was the impetus given, that but for a desperate effort to keep his feet, and a bound or two, the lad would have gone down upon his face.

As it was, the actual first leap took him level with the door of the cellar, the second right on to a flight of steps

beyond in the darkness, and as he stood panting there, he realised the meaning of the old smuggler's mistake; for he had forgotten that he was roughly dressed as a sailor boy, and had a red worsted tasselled cap, well drawn down over his besmirched face.

As Archy stood there in the darkness, at the foot of the stair which he knew must lead up into the house, he looked back to see a man come out of the cellar, his figure just dimly seen by the light from within and below, and over the man's shoulders were swung a couple of kegs.

Archy held his breath, and felt that in all probability the farmer had contented himself with driving him in to work, for he made no further movement, and the coming out of this man, and another who followed directly, completely reassured him. It was evident, too, that they did not know of his presence, and with his heart beating with hopes of escape, as he more and more understood that he had been taken for one of the boys of the gang, he backed softly up the steps, more and more into the darkness, till further progress was stayed by a door.

Here he stopped, panting, and holding his hand upon his throbbing heart. Then feeling that he would be seen directly if a lanthorn were brought into the passage, he pressed the lock, it yielded, and he stepped softly up on to a stone floor.

Here all was blacker than before, but it was a haven of refuge, and he passed in and softly closed the door behind him, to stand listening.

All was still as death, and he began to ask himself what he should do next. He dared not stay where he was, for if the smugglers were so much at home at the Hoze that they could come like this by night, the farmer or some one

else might at any moment come up those steps with a light, and then discovery was certain.

But what to do? A closet—a room—a staircase—an open window leading in another direction to that where the men were busy! If he could find any of these he might be safe, and he was about to try and search for some means of concealment or escape when a cold shudder of superstitious dread ran through him, and he began to recall all he had read of haunted houses, for from somewhere in the darkness in front of him, he heard a low, piteous cry.

Archy was as courageous as most boys of his age, as he was proving by his adventurous acts; but this sound, heard by a lad living in a generation wanting in our modern enlightenment, paralysed him. His blood seemed to run cold, his lips parted, his throat felt dry, and a peculiar shiver ran over his skin, accompanied by a sensation as if tiny fingers, cold as ice, were parting and turning his hair.

Again the sigh came, to be followed by a cold current of air, which swept across the boy's face, and then there was a low rustling sound, which hovered in front of him, and went up and up and up, and then slowly died away.

Archy's first impulse, as he recovered himself a little in the silence which followed, was to turn, open the door, and flee. But he hesitated. It would be right into the hands of the enemy. Besides, the terribly chilling sounds he had heard had ceased, and he felt less cowardly.

'Perhaps,' he said to himself, 'it was fancy, or nothing to be afraid of.'

A heavy step on the other side of the door alarmed him more, and stretching out his hands, he stepped forward, went cautiously on and on, and at the end of a few yards

touched what felt like panelling. The next moment he realised that he had reached a door, which was yielding, and he passed into a room, to scent the cool night air, and hear subdued sounds without and below.

He was in a room over the cellar, he was sure, and the window was wide open. He crept to it, guided by the cold air which came in, and had just reached it when he heard rapid footsteps, and some one panted,—

'Where's the skipper?'

'Here. What is it?' whispered Shackle, who seemed close to where the midshipman stood.

'Jemmy Dadd—came from the cove. Boat's crew landed.'

'Run down and tell them all to come back,' said Shackle hoarsely.

'I did, and they're coming. I met first man.'

'Right! Get all back in quick!'

As he finished speaking, Archy could hear the dull, soft steps of laden men returning, and more and more kept coming, and it was soon evident that they were quickly and silently replacing the kegs they had been carrying down hill to where tumbrils were waiting for a load.

The midshipman stood a little way back from the window, seeing nothing, but drinking all this in, and in imagination grasping the whole scene which went on for the next quarter of an hour or so, by which time the last load seemed to have been brought back.

As he listened, he wondered what boat's crew it could be that had landed, as no arrangement had been made for any help to be sent till he either signalled from the cliff or went down to the cove at twelve the next day, where a boat would be about half a mile out, with two men in her fishing.

He could not understand it; all he could tell for certain was that the smugglers had been alarmed, and that they would not remove the cargo that night, for all at once he heard the sharp snap of a great lock beneath his feet; this was followed by the closing of a door, and directly after there was the shuffling of feet, and Shackle's voice was heard in a hoarse whisper,—

'Got the lanthorn, boy?'

'Yes, father.'

'Off you go then—all. Scatter!'

'You won't try again to-night?'

'Try? no,' said the farmer savagely. 'Wish I had some of them here!'

There were retiring steps then, and Archy leaned forward towards the window, to utter a faint cry of pain, for his head had come in contact with something, and as he put up his hand he found that the window was protected by thick iron bars.

He stood listening till not a sound could be heard, and then he drew back from the window, thinking about his next course, gazing out into the darkness the while, and wishing he could have stepped out, leaped down, and fled at once.

'Made our plans badly,' he thought to himself. 'I can't signal even if I could find my way to the cliff, and I ought to be able to get back here at once to seize all this store, and'—

More unpleasant thoughts came back now about how hard it seemed to have to betray these people.

'Can't help it,' he said to himself. 'I am a king's officer, and I've got to do *my* duty.'

Then to keep these thoughts from troubling him, he began to think again about the cutter.

They never expected that he would get valuable information so soon. He had been wonderfully fortunate, but what was to be his next course? Certainly to get back to the ship as soon as possible, but that was not possible till morning, and he was miles away from the cove.

What should he do? Two hours would be plenty for the work, and as he guessed it was not much past twelve now. How was he to pass all those weary hours? If he could find some barn or even a haystack he would not have cared, but it seemed to him that he would have to pass the remainder of the night in walking, and watching so that he did not encounter any of the smuggler gang on his way back and so raise their suspicions.

Better be off at once. Perhaps, after all, he thought as by an inspiration, the lieutenant had altered his plans, and was sending men to look after and protect him.

'Let's see,' said Archy to himself. 'I must go out of this door, and keep turning a little to the right till I feel the door at the top of the stairs.'

Suppose any one should hear him, take him for a thief, and fire at him?

Suppose that door at the end of the passage had been locked by the smugglers?

It seemed so probable, that a nervous feeling attacked the lad. He would be a prisoner, and discovered by the inmates in the morning.

He would soon put that to the proof, he told himself; and he was about to step cautiously back toward the door when another thought sent a shudder through him.

Suppose as soon as he got into the hall, or whatever place it was, he should hear that sigh again and the rustling sound?

He shrank back as he recalled how it had affected him.

'Oh, what a coward I am!' he said softly; and he took a step forward, where very faintly, as if far distant, he heard the rustling sound again. It came nearer and nearer, then there was a low sigh, the door was pushed open, for the rustling came quite plainly now, accompanied by a faint breathing.

The door closed with a soft dull sound as Archy stood as if turned into stone, his hair again feeling as if moved by hands, and he would have spoken, but no words would come.

At last, as he stood there in front of the window, terrified too much to stir, he suddenly heard a faint sound as of catching breath, and a voice said in a hurried, frightened whisper,—

'Who's there? Is that you, Ram?'

Archy tried to speak but could not. Before he could draw a breath of relief, feeling as he did that this was nothing of which he need feel such fear, the voice said again,—

'You are trying to frighten me. I can see you plainly there by the window. How dare you come in here like this, sir? Go back home with your horrid men.'

CHAPTER XII.

'YOU are making a mistake,' said Archy softly.

'Oh!'

There was a cry and a quick rustling toward the door.

'Don't—don't cry out; I did not come to frighten you.'

'Who are you?

'I am from the cutter lying off the coast. You saw me and spoke to me to-day when the dog came at me.'

There was a low wailing sound which troubled the midshipman, and he said quickly,—

'Can you not believe me? I did not come to frighten you; you frightened me.'

'Then, why are you here? How dare you break into our house. Oh, I know! I know!'

'Don't cry,' he said. 'I was obliged to come. It was by accident I came into this room. I was trying to find out about the smugglers.'

'And—and—you have not found out anything?' came in quick, frightened tones.

Archy was silent.

'Why don't you speak, sir?

'What am I to say? I am on duty. Yes, I have found out all I wanted to know.'

'Ah!' came again out of the darkness, in a low wailing tone.

'I wish you would believe me, that I am in as great trouble about it as you are.'

'But your men. They are close here, then, and they frightened these people away.'

'I suppose so. I don't know,' said Archy.

'Don't they know that you are here?'

'No.'

'But you will go and tell all you have found out?'

'Yes,' said Archy, slowly as he strained his eyes to try and make out the speaker.

'That my father, Sir Risdon Graeme, has smuggled goods here?'

'What else can I do?' replied Archy sadly.

There was a sound of breath being drawn sharply through the teeth, and then the voice seemed changed as the next words came,—

'Do you know what this means?'

Archy was silent.

'They will put him in prison, and—and'—

There was a low burst of sobbing, and the young midshipman felt his own breast swell.

Suddenly the sobbing ceased, and the girl said slowly,—

'You shall not tell. It is not my father's doing. He could not help it. He hates the smugglers. You shall not tell. Pray, pray, say you will not!'

Archy was silent.

'Do you not hear me?' came in imperious tones.

'Yes, I hear you,' he replied; 'but it is my duty, and'—

'Yes—yes—speak!'

'I must.'

'Oh!'

The interjection came as if it were the outcome of sudden passion. There was a quick, rustling sound, and before the boy could realise what was to come, the door was closed, the lock shot into its socket, and he heard the grinding sound of bolts, top and bottom.

Then, as Archy stood in the dark, literally aghast with astonishment, he heard the faint rustling once more, and again all was silent.

'Well!' he exclaimed; 'and I felt sorry for her as one might for one's sister at home, and hung back from getting her people into trouble. Of all the fierce little tartars! Oh, it's beyond anything! Why, she has locked me up!'

He laughed, but it was a curious kind of laugh, full of vexation, injured *amour propre*, as the French call our love of our own dignity, of which Archibald Raystoke, in the full flush of his young belief in his importance as a British officer, had a pretty good stock.

'I never did!' he exclaimed, after standing listening for a few minutes to see if the girl would repent and return. 'It all comes of dressing up in this stupid way, like a rough fisher lad. If I had been in uniform, she would not have dared.'

Cold water came on this idea directly, as he recalled the fact that the darkness was intense, and Celia could not have seen him.

'And I meant to save them from trouble if I could, out of respect for them all, and did not believe that such people could stoop to be mixed up with rogues and smugglers. But, all right! I've got my duty to do, and I'll do it. I'll soon show them that I am not going to be played with. Looked such a nice, lady-like girl, and all the time she's a female smuggler, and must have been

sitting up to let them in, and lock up after the rascals had done.'

Rather hard measure, by the way, to deal out to the anxious girl, who could not rest while Shackle's gang were busy about the place, and had come stealthily down to open the little corner room window, and watch from time to time until they had gone.

'Well,' said Archy, as there was no further sound heard, 'I'm not going to put up with this. I'll soon rattle some one up;' and he went sharply to the door, felt for the handle, tried it, and was about to shake it and bang at the panels, when discretion got the better of valour.

For it suddenly occurred to him that he was not only a prisoner, but a prisoner in the power of a very reckless set of people, who would stop at nothing. They had a valuable cargo hidden in the cellar beneath where he stood, and themselves to save, and naturally they would not hesitate to deal hardly with him, when quite a young, apparently gentle girl treated him as she had done.

'No,' he thought to himself, 'I don't believe they would kill me, but they would knock me about.'

On the whole, he decided that it would not be pleasant to be knocked about. The kick he had received was a foretaste of what he might expect, and after a little consideration he came to the conclusion that his duty was to escape, and get back to the cutter as quickly as he could.

To do this he must scheme, lie hid till morning, then make for the nearest point, and signal for help, unless a boat's crew were already searching for him.

How to escape?

The door was, he well knew, fast. The window was barred, but he went to it, and tried the bars one by one, to find them all solidly fitted into the stone sill.

Perhaps there was another way out, and to prove that he went softly round to feel the oak panelling which covered the walls, to come upon a door directly. His hopes began to rise, but they fell directly, for he found it was a closet.

Next moment, as he felt his way about, his hand touched an old-fashioned marble mantelpiece.

Fireplace—chimney! Yes, if other ways failed, he could escape up the chimney.

No, that was too bad. He could not do that. And if he did, it would only be to reach the roof of the house, and perhaps find no way down.

He went on, and found a closet to match the first on the other side of the fireplace. Then all round the room. Panels everywhere, but no means of escape, and he went again to stand at the window, to bemoan his stupidity for allowing a weak girl to make a prisoner of him in so absurd a way.

Sympathy and pity for the dwellers in the Hoze were completely gone now, and he set his teeth fast, and mentally called himself a weak idiot for ever thinking about such people. For the first few minutes he had felt something uncommonly like alarm, and had dwelt upon the consequences to himself if the smugglers found the spy upon their proceedings; but that dread had passed away in the idea that he had to do his duty, and before he could do that he must escape.

A chair or two. Then an easy-chair. A narrow table against the wall in two places. An awkwardly-shaped high-backed chair with elbows and cushions. A thick carpet in the centre. Nothing else in the room, as far as he could make out in the darkness, and if those wretched bars had only been away, how soon he could have escaped!

He went and tried to force his head through, recalling as he did that where a person's head would go the rest of the body would pass. But there was no chance for his body there, the head would not go first.

He returned, after listening intently, unable to hear a sound, and put his ear to the key-hole of the door to listen there; but all was still, and the faint hope that the girl might be near and open to an appeal for his liberty died away.

Again he felt all about the room, to satisfy himself afresh that there was no way out, and he paused by the chimney, half disposed to essay that means of escape, but he shook his head.

'A fellow who was shut up in prison for life might do it,' he said, 'but not in a case like this.'

Then, utterly wearied out, with his long and arduous twenty-four hours' task, beginning with his watch on the cutter's deck, he felt his way to the big chair opposite to the window to rest his legs, and try and think out some plan.

'Nobody can think well when he's tired,' he said; and he began to run over in his mind the whole of the incidents since he landed a few hours earlier.

CHAPTER XIII.

'SURE you've looked round everywhere, boy?'

'Yes, father, quite.'

'Nothing left nowhere? Sure none of the lads chucked anything aside the path when they ran up?'

'Yes, father. I looked well both sides.'

'Humph! Worse lads than you if you knew where to find 'em.'

'Thank ye, father.'

'I'm going home to breakfast.'

'Shall I come too, father?'

'No. Stop here till Sir Risdon comes down, and tell him I'm very sorry; that we should have cleared out last night, only a born fool saw Jerry Nandy's lobster boat coming into the cove, and came running to say it was a party from the cutter.'

'Yes, father.'

'Tell him not to be uneasy; 'tis all right, and I'll have everything clear away to-night.'

The dull sound of departing steps, and a low whistling sound coming down through the skylight window into the cabin where Archy Raystoke lay with his heavy eyelids pressed down by sleep.

'What a queer dream!' he thought to himself. 'No; it couldn't be a dream. He must be awake. But how queer for Mr. Gurr to be talking like that to Andrew Teal, the boy who helped the cook! And why did Andy call Mr. Gurr father?'

There was an interval of thinking over this knotty question, during which the low whistling went on.

'If Mr. Brough goes on deck and catches that boy whistling, there'll be someone to pay and no pitch hot,' thought Archy nautically. 'But what did Mr. Gurr mean about going home to breakfast? And I'm hungry too. Time I was up, I suppose.

He gave himself a twist, and was about to turn out of his sleeping place, and then opened his eyes widely, and stared about him, too much overcome still by his heavy sleep to quite comprehend why it was that he was in a gloomy, oak-panelled, poorly furnished room, staring at an iron-barred open window.

No: he was not dreaming, for he was looking out on the sea, over which a faint mist hung like wreaths of smoke. It was just before sunrise too, for there were flecks of orange high up in the sky.

What did it mean?

The answer came like a flash. He recollected it all now, even to his sitting down in the chair, wearied out.

He had been fast asleep, and those words had awakened him.

What did they say?—false alarm—tell Sir Risdon they would clear all away to-night—see if anything had been left about—lobster boat!

Then no boat had come from the cutter last night, and the lieutenant would wait for him to signal, and here he

was a prisoner, with the information—locked up—the very news the lieutenant would give anything to know.

He jumped up from the chair feeling horribly stiff, and looked steadily round for a way to escape before it was too late. Once out of that room he could run, and by daylight the smugglers dare not hunt him down.

'Oh, those bars!' he mentally exclaimed, and he was advancing toward them, when just as he drew near, there was a rustling noise under the window, a couple of hands seized the bars, there was a scratching of boot-toes against stone work, and Ram's face appeared to gaze into the room by intention, but into the astonished countenance of the young midshipman instead.

Ram was the first to recover from his surprise.

'Hullo!' he said, 'who are you? I was wondering why that window was open.'

'Here, quick! Go round and open the door. I was shut in last night by mistake.'

'Oh!' said Ram looking puzzled. 'I saw you last night, and wondered whose boy you was. It was you father kicked for shirking, and — My!— well: I hardly knowed you.'

'Nonsense! come round and open the door. I've been shut in all night.'

'Won't do,' said Ram grinning. 'Think I don't know you, Mr. Orficer? Where's your fine clothes and your sword? Here, what made you dress up like that?'

'You're mistaken,' said Archy gruffly, as he made a feeble struggle to keep up the character he had assumed.

'Won't do,' said Ram quickly. 'I know you. Been playing the spy, that's what you've been doing. Who locked you in?'

'Will you come round and open the door?' said Archy in an angry whisper.

'Oh, of course,' replied the boy grinning; and he dropped down, rushed through the bushes, and disappeared from view.

Archy stepped back to the door listening, but there was not a sound.

'He has gone to give the alarm,' thought the prisoner, and he looked excitedly round for a way of escape.

Nothing but the chimney presented itself. The door was too strong to attack, and he remembered the three fastenings.

Should he try the chimney?

And be stuck there, and dragged out like a rabbit by the hind legs from his hole!

'No; I've degraded myself enough,' he said angrily, 'and there are sure to be bars across. Hah!'

A happy inspiration had come, and placing one hand upon his breast, he thrust in the other, gave a tug, and drew out his little curved dirk, glanced at the edge, ran to the window and began to cut at one of the bars.

Labour in vain. He divided the paint, and produced a few squeaks and grating sounds, as he realised that the attempt was madness.

Turning sharply, he looked about the room; then, after glancing ruefully at the bright little weapon, half way up the blade of a rich deep blue, in which was figured a pattern in gold, he yielded to necessity, and began to chop at the top bar of the grate, so as to nick the edges of his weapon and make it saw-like.

The result was not very satisfactory, but sufficiently so to make him essay the bar of the window once more, producing a grating, ear-assailing sound, as he found that

now he did make a little impression,—so little though, that the probability was, if he kept on working well for twenty-four hours, he would not get through.

But at the end of five minutes he stopped, and thrust back the dirk into its sheath.

He fancied he had heard steps outside the room door, and he ran to it and listened, in the faint hope that the boy might have come to open it and set him free.

It was a very faint hope, and one he felt not likely to be realised, and he returned once more to the window, with the intention of resuming his task, when he heard the bushes pressed aside by some one coming, and directly after the bars were seized as before. Ram sprang up, found a resting-place for his toes, and looked in, grinning at him.

'Hullo!' he cried, in a whisper, as if he did not wish to be heard; 'here you are still.'

'Yes. Come round and open the door.'

'What'll yer give me?'

'Anything I can,' cried Archy eagerly.

'Well, you give me that little sword o' your'n.'

'No; I can't part with that.'

'Ha! ha! ha!' laughed the boy jeeringly.

'But I'll—yes, I'll give you a guinea, if you will let me out.'

'Guinea?' said the boy. 'Think I'd do it for a guinea?'

'Well, then, two. Be quick, there's a good fellow. I want to get away at once.'

'Not you,' said the boy jeeringly. 'It would be a pity. I say, do you know what you look like?'

'A fisher-boy.'

'Not you. Only a sham. Why, your clothes don't fit you, and your cap's put on all skew-rew. Don't look a bit like a fisher-lad, and never will.'

'Never mind about that; let me out of this place.'

'What for?' cried Ram

'Because I want my liberty.'

'Not you. Looks comf'table enough as you are. I say, do you know what you are like now?'

'I told you, a fisher-boy!' cried Archy impatiently, but trying not to offend his visitor, who possessed the power of conferring freedom, by speaking sharply.

'Not you. Look like a wild beast in a cage. Like a monkey.'

'You insolent'—

Archy checked himself, and the boy laughed.

'It was your turn yesterday, it's mine to-day. What a game! You laughed and fleered at me when I was on the cutter's deck. I can laugh and fleer at you now. I say, you do look a rum 'un. Just like a big monkey in a show.'

'Look here, sir!' said Archy, losing his temper. 'Gentlemen don't fight with low, common fellows like you, but if you do not come round and let me out, next time we meet I'll have a bit of rope's end ready for you.'

Ram showed his white teeth, as he burst out with a long, low fit of laughter.

'You rope's end me!' he said. 'Why, I could tie you up in a knot, and heave you off the cliff any day. What a game! Bit of a middy, fed on salt tack and weevilly biscuit, talk of giving me rope's end! Dressed up with a dirty face and a bit o' canvas! Go back aboard, and put on your uniform. Ha! ha! ha!'

'Once more; will you come and let me out?'

'No. I'm going to keep you here till the gentlefolks get up, and then I'll bring 'em round to see the monkey in his cage, just like they do in the shows, when you pay

a penny. See you for nothing, middy. I say, where's your sword? Why don't you draw it, and come out and fight? I'll fight you with a stick.'

'You insolent young scoundrel!' cried Archy, darting



his hand through between the bars, overcome now by his rage, and catching Ram by the collar.

To his astonishment the boy did not flinch, but thrust his own arms through, placing them about the middy's

waist, clenching his hands behind, and uttering a sharp whistle.

It was a trap, and the midshipman understood it now. The boy had been baiting him to rouse him to attack, and he was doubly a prisoner now, held fast against the bars, so that he could not even wrench round his head as he heard the door behind him opened, while as he opened his mouth to cry for help, a great rough hand was placed over his eyes, pressing his head back, a handkerchief was jammed between his teeth, and as he heard a deep growling voice say, 'Hold him tight!' a rope was drawn about his chest, pinioning his arms to his sides, and another secured his ankles.

'Now a handkerchief,' said the gruff voice. 'Fold it wide. Be ready!'

The midshipman gave his head a jerk, but the effort was vain, for the hand over his eyes gave place to a broad handkerchief, which was tightly tied behind, and then a fierce voice whispered in his ear,—

'Keep still, or you'll get your weasand slit. D'ye hear?'

But in spite of the threat the lad, frenzied now by rage and excitement, struggled so hard that a fresh rope was wound round him, and he was lifted up by two men, and carried away.

By this time there was a strange singing in his ears, a feeling as if the blood was flooding his eyes, a peculiar, hot, suffocating feeling in his breast, and then he seemed to go off into a painful, feverish sleep, for he knew no more.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANGRY, but trembling with dread, Celia had hurried up to her own room, to try and think what was best to be done. She had secured the door of the room below to gain time, feeling as she did that, as the young midshipman knew of the storing of the smuggled goods, he would, the moment he was free, go back to the cutter, bring help, there would perhaps be a desperate fight, with men killed, and her father would be dragged away to prison.

Her first thought was to go to her father, but she shrank from doing this as her mother would probably be asleep, and in her delicate state the alarm might seriously affect her.

Having grown learned in the ways of the smugglers, from their having on several occasions made use of the great vault without asking permission—at times when Sir Risdon was away from home—Celia had sat up to watch that night to see if the men would fetch away the kegs and bales; hence her presence during the scene, and when she had awakened to the fact that the midshipman had played spy and was ready to denounce her father, she felt that all was over.

Three times over, after listening at the head of the stairs

for sounds from below where her prisoner was confined, Celia had crept on tiptoe to her father's door, only to shrink away again not daring to speak.

For what would he say to her? she thought. She had no right to be downstairs watching the acts of the smugglers, and she dreaded to make a confession of her knowledge of these nocturnal proceedings.

At last, bewildered, anxious, and worn out, she knelt down by her bed, to consider with her head in her hands, ready for kindly nature to bring her comfort, for when she started up again the sun was streaming brightly in at her window.

She pressed her hands to her temples, and tried to think about the business of the past night, and by degrees she collected her thoughts, and recalled that the smugglers had come to take up their kegs and bales from the temporary store to carry them further inland, that she had discovered the young midshipman watching, and to save her father she had shut their enemy in the lower corner room.

Celia stood with her cheeks burning, trembling and anxious, and after bathing her face and arranging her hair, she went out into the broad passage and listened at her father's door.

It was too soon for him to be stirring yet, and determining at last to go and declare his innocency, and make an appeal to the frank-looking lad, she crept timidly down the grand old flight of stairs, trying to think out what she would say.

There were two flights to descend, and the first took a long time; but she worked out a nice little speech, in which she would tell the cutter's officer that her father had once been rich, but he had espoused the young Pretender's cause,

and the result had been that he had become so impoverished that there had been a time when they had had hardly enough to keep them and the old maid-servant who still clung to their fallen fortunes.

By the time she was at the bottom of the second flight she was ready and quite hopeful, and, with the tears standing in her eyes, she felt sure that the frank, gentlemanly lad would be merciful, forgive her, and save her father from a terrible disgrace.

She had, then, her speech all ready, but when she spoke everything was condensed in the one exclamation—

'Oh!'

For as she reached the hall where her coming and going had so startled the midshipman in the darkness, she found that the door was wide open and the window shut.

She looked about bewildered, but there was no sign of the room having been occupied.

'Did I dream it all?' she said in an awe-stricken whisper. 'No: the men came to take away the brandy and silk, and I saw them here.'

She pressed her hands to her temples, for the surprise had confused her, and in addition her head ached and throbbed.

'Could I have dreamed it?' she asked herself again. 'No, I remember the men coming to fetch away the things and then I found him watching.'

She stood gazing before her, with her puzzled feeling increasing, till a thought struck her.

She saw the men come to fetch the kegs. If she really did see that, the kegs would be gone.

The proof was easy. If the brandy and silk were gone, the door of the vault would be open. If the things were not fetched away, it would be locked up; and if she tapped

on the door with her knuckles, there would be a dull sound instead of a hollow, echoing noise.

She ran quickly down, and the door was locked.

She tapped with her knuckles, and the sound indicated that the place was full, for all was dull and heavy and no reverberation in the place.

'I must have dreamed it all,' she cried joyously. 'I have thought so much about it that I have fancied all this, and made myself ill. Why, of course he could not have got in there to watch or the men would have seen him come.'

It is very easy to place faith in that which you wish to believe.

CHAPTER XV.

LIEUTENANT BROUGH was out for a long walk. That is to say, he had his glass tucked under his arm, and was trotting up and down his cleanly holystoned deck, pausing from time to time to raise his glass to his eye, and watch the top of the cliff, ending by gazing in the direction of the cove.

The men said he had been putting them through their facings that morning, and he had been finding more fault in two hours than in the previous week, for he was getting fidgety. He had not enjoyed his breakfast, and it was getting on toward the time for his mid-day meal.

Suddenly he stopped short by the master, who had also been using a glass, and was evidently waiting to be spoken to.

'Seemed in good spirits last night, Mr. Gurr, eh?'

'Mr. Raystoke, sir? Oh yes.'

'I mean liked his job?'

'Yes, sir; determined on it.'

'Humph! Time we had some news of him, eh?'

'Yes, sir; but he may turn up on the cliff at any moment.'

'Yes. Men quite ready?'

'Yes, sir.'

'That's right. Of course, well armed?'

'Yes, sir; you did tell me. Soon as the signal comes, we shall push off. Awkward bit o' country, sir; six miles' row before you can find a place to land.'

'Very awkward, but they have to find a place to land their spirits, Mr. Gurr, and if we don't soon have something to show we shall be called to account.'

'Very unlucky, sir. Seems to me like going eel-fishing with your bare hand.'

'Worse. You might catch one by accident.'

'So shall we yet, sir. These fellows are very cunning, but we shall be too many for them one of these days.'

'Dear me! dear me!' said the little lieutenant after a few more turns up and down. 'I don't like this at all. I don't think I ought to have let a boy like that go alone. You don't think, Mr. Gurr, that they would dare to injure him if he was so unlucky as to be caught?'

'Well, sir,' said the master, hesitating, 'smugglers are smugglers.'

'Mr. Gurr,' said the little lieutenant, raising himself up on his toes, so as to be as high as possible, 'will you have the goodness to talk sense?'

'Certainly, sir.'

'Smugglers are smugglers, indeed. What did you suppose I thought they were? Oysters?'

'Beg pardon, sir; didn't mean any harm.'

'Getting very late!' said the little officer after another sweep of the top of the cliff, especially above where the French lugger landed the goods. 'I shall be obliged to send you on shore, Mr. Gurr. You must go and find him. I'm getting very anxious about Mr. Raystoke.'

'Start at once, sir?'

'No, wait another half hour. Very ill-advised thing to

do. I cannot think what you were doing, Mr. Gurr, to advise me to do such a thing.'

'Me, sir?' said the master, looking astonished.

'Yes. A great pity. I ought not to have listened to you; but in my anxiety to leave no stone unturned to capture some of these scoundrels, I was ready to do anything.'

'Very true, sir.'

'Now, my good fellow, what do you mean by that?

'It was only an observation, sir.'

'Then I must request that you will not make it again. "Very true?" of course, what I say is very true. Do you think I should say a thing that was false?'

'Beg pardon, sir. 'Fraid I picked up some awk'ard expressions aboard the old frigate.'

'Awk-ward, Mr. Gurr, awkward.'

'Yes, sir; of course.'

'You do not understand the drift of my remarks.'

''Fraid not, sir,' said the master, smiling; 'understand drift of the tide much better.'

'Mr. Gurr!'

'Yes, sir.'

'I was trying to teach you to pronounce the king's English correctly, and you turn it off with a ribald remark.'

'Beg pardon, sir. 'Nother o' my frigate bad habits.'

'It is a great privilege, Mr. Gurr, to be one of those who speak the English tongue, so do not abuse it. Say awk-ward in future, not awk'ard.'

'Certainly, sir, I'll try,' said the master; and then to himself, 'Starboard, larboard, for'ard, back'ard, awk'ard. Why, what does he mean?'

By this time the little lieutenant was scanning the cliffs

again, and the master took off his hat and wiped his forehead.

'Talk about thistles and stinging nettles,' he muttered, 'why there's no bearing him to-day, and all on account of a scamp of a middy such as there's a hundred times too many on in the R'yal Navy. Dunno though; bit cocky and nose in air when he's in full uniform, and don't know which is head and which is his heels, but he aren't such a very bad sort o' boy. Well, what's the matter with you?'

Dirty Dick screwed up his mouth as if to speak, but only stared.

'Don't turn yourself into a figurehead of an old wreck sir. What do you want?'

'Leave to go ashore, sir.'

'Well, you're going soon as the skipper orders.

'I mean all alone by myself, sir.'

'What for? There aren't a public-house for ten miles.

'Didn't mean that.'

'Then what did you mean? Speak out, and don't do the double shuffle all over my clean deck.'

'No, sir.'

'Hopping about like a cat on hot bricks. Now, then, why do you want to go ashore?'

'Try and find Mr. Raystoke, sir. Beginning to feel scarred about him.'

'What's that?' said the lieutenant, who had come back from abaft unheard. 'Scared about whom?'

'Beg pardon, didn't mean nowt, sir,' said the sailor touching his forelock.

'Yes, you did, sir. Now look here,' cried the lieutenant, shaking his glass at the man, 'don't you try to deceive me. You meant that you were getting uneasy about Mr. Raystoke's prolonged absence.'

'Yes sir, that's it,' said Dick eagerly.

'Then how dare you have the effrontery to tell me that you did not mean "nowt" as you have the confounded north country insolence to call it? For two pins, sir,—women's pins, sir, not belaying pins,—I'd have you put ashore, with orders not to show your dirty face again till you had found Mr. Raystoke.'

Dirty Dick passed his hand over his face carefully, and then looked at the palm to see if any of the swarthy tan had come off.

'Do you hear me, sir?' cried the lieutenant.

'Yes, sir,' said the man humbly. 'Shall I go at once sir?'

'No. Wait. Keep a sharp look-out on the cliff to see if Mr. Raystoke is making signals for a boat. I daresay he has been there all the time, only you took up my attention with your chatter.'

He swung round, walked aft and began sweeping the shore again with his glass, while the master and Dick exchanged glances which meant a great deal.

'He is in a wax,' said Dick to himself, as he walked to the side, and stood shading his eyes with his hands, looking carefully for the signals which did not come.

Two hours more passed away, during which it was a dead calm, and the sun beat down so hotly that the seams began to send out little black beads of pitch, and drops formed under some of the ropes ready to come off on the first hand which touched them.

At last the little lieutenant could bear the anxiety no longer.

'Pipe away the men to that boat there,' he said; and as the crew sprang in, 'Now, Mr. Gurr,' he said, 'I'm only going to say one thing to you in the way of instructions.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Will you have the goodness to wait till I have done speaking, Mr. Gurr, and not compel me to say all I wish over again?'

'Beg pardon, sir,' said the master deprecatingly.

'I say, sir, I have only one order to give you. Get ashore as soon as you can, and find and bring back Mr. Raystoke.'

'Yes, sir,' cried the master, and he walked over the side, glad to get into the boat and push off, muttering the while, 'and I always thought him such a quiet, amiable little chap. He's a Tartar; that's what he is. Making all this fuss about a boy who, as like as not, is having a game with us. Don't see me getting out o' temper with everybody, and spitting and swearing like a mad Tom-cat. Hang the boy! he's on'y a middy.—Now, my lads,—now, my lads, put your backs into it, will you?'

The boat was already surging through the water faster than it had ever gone before, but the men bent lower and the longer, and the blades of the oars made the water flash and foam as they dipped and rose with the greatest of regularity.

For the lieutenant's anxiety about the young officer of the *White Hawk* was growing more and more contagious, and the men gave a cheer as they span the boat along, every smart sailor on board thinking about the frank, straightforward lad who had so bravely gone on the risky expedition.

'Look ye here, Jemmy, said one of the men to his nearest mate, 'talk about 'tacking the enemy, if wrong's happened to our young gentleman, all I can say is, as I hopes it's orders to land every night to burn willages and sack everything we can.'

'And so says all of us,' came in a chorus from the rest of the crew.

'Steady! my lads, steady!' cried the master—'keep stroke;' and then he began to make plans as to his first proceedings on getting ashore.

He wasn't long in making these plans, and when the cove was reached, the two fishing luggers and another boat or two lying there were carefully overhauled, Gurr gazing at the men on board like a fierce dog, and literally worrying the different fishermen as cleverly as a cross-examining counsel would a witness ashore.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALWAYS the same answer.

No, they hadn't seen no sailor lad in a red cap, only their own boys, and they were all at home. Had he lost one?

Yes; a boy had come ashore and not returned.

The different men questioned chuckled, and one oracular-looking old fellow spat, wiped his lips on the back of his hand, stared out to sea, and said gruffly,—

'Runned away.'

'Ay,' said another, 'that's it. You won't see him again.'

'Won't I?' muttered Gurr between his teeth. 'I'll let some of you see about that, my fine fellows.'

He led his men on, stopping at each cluster of cottages and shabby little farm to ask suspiciously, as if he felt certain the person he questioned was hiding the truth.

But he always came out again to his men with an anxious look in his eyes, and generally ranged up alongside of Dick.

'No, my lad,' he would say, 'they haven't seen 'im there;' and then with his head bent down, but his eyes eagerly searching the road from side to side, he went on towards Shackle's farm.

'Say, Mester Gurr,' said Dick, after one of these searches, 'he wouldn't run away?'

'What! Mr. Raystoke, sir? Don't be a fool.'

'No, sir,' replied Dick humbly, and the men tramped on with a couple of open-mouthed, barefooted boys following them to stare at their cutlasses and pistols.

'Say, Mester Gurr,' ventured Dick, after a pause, 'none of 'em wouldn't ha' done that, would they?'

Dick had followed the master's look, as he shaded his eyes and stared over the green slope which led up to the cliffs.

'What?'

'Chucked him off yonder.'

Gurr glanced round to see if the men were looking, and then said rather huskily but kindly,—

'In ord'nary, Dick, my lad, no; but when smugglers finds themselves up in corners where they can't get away, they turns and fights like rats, and when they fights they bites.'

'Ah!' ejaculated Dick sadly.

'You're only a common sailor, Dick, and I'm your officer, but though I speak sharp untoe you, I respect you, Dick, for you like that lad.'

'Say, Mester Gurr, sir, which thankful I am to you for speaking so; but you don't really think as he has come to harm?'

'I hope not, Dick; I hope not; but smugglers don't stand at anything sometimes.'

Dick sighed, and then all at once he spat in his fist, rubbed his hands together and clenched them, a hard, fierce aspect coming into his rough dark face, which seemed to promise severe retaliation if anything had happened to the young officer.

There was nowhere else to seach as far as Gurr could see save the little farm in the hollow, and the black-looking stone house up on the hill among the trees.

Gurr, who looked wonderfully bull-dog like in aspect, made straight for the farm, where the first person he encountered was Mrs. Shackle, who, innocent enough, poor woman, came to the door to bob a curtsey to the king's men, while Jemmy Dadd, who was slowly loading a tumbril in whose shafts was the sleepy grey horse, stuck his fork down into the heap of manure from the cowsheds, rested his hands on the top and his chin upon his hands, to stare and grin at the sailors he recognised.

'Morning, marm,' said Gurr; 'sorry to trouble you, but'—

'Oh, sir,' interrupted Mrs. Shackle, 'sure*lye* you are not going to tumble over my house again! I do assure you there's nothing here but what you may see.'

'If you'd let me finish, you'd know,' said Gurr gruffly. 'One of our boys is missing. Seen him up here? Boy 'bout seventeen with a red cap.'

'No, sir; indeed I've not.'

'Don't know as he has been seen about here, do you? said Gurr, looking at her searchingly.

'No, sir.'

'Haven't heard any one talking about him, eh? Come ashore yesterday.'

Mrs. Shackle shook her head.

'Thank ye!—No, Dick,' continued the master, turning back to where the men were waiting, and unconsciously brushing against the bush behind which the middy had hidden himself, 'that woman knows nothing. If she knew evil had come to the poor lad, her face would tell tales like print. Hi! you, sir,' he said, going towards where Jemmy stood grinning.

'Mornin',' said Jemmy; 'come arter some more milk?'

'No,' growled Gurr.

'Don't want to take the cow away agen, do 'ee?'

'Look here, my lad, one of our boys is missing. Came ashore yesterday, lad of seventeen in a red cap.'

'Oh!' said Jemmy with a vacant look. 'Don't mean him as come with you, do you?'

'I said a lad 'bout seventeen, in a red cap like yours, said Gurr very shortly.

'Aren't seen no lads with no red caps up here,' said the man with a vacant look. 'Have he runned away?'

'Are you sure you haven't seen him, my lad?' growled Gurr; 'because, look here, it may be a serious thing for some of you, if he is not found.'

The man shook his head, and stared as if he didn't half understand the drift of what was said.

Gurr turned angrily away, and to find himself facing Dick.

'Well, seen anything suspicious?'

'No, sir,' said Dick, 'on'y my fingers is a itchin'.'

'Scratch them then.'

'Nay, you don't understand,' grumbled Dick. 'I mean to have a turn at that chap, Master Gurr, sir. I feel as if I had him for 'bout quarter hour I could knock something out of him.'

'Nonsense! Come along. Now, my lads, forward!'

Jemmy Dadd's countenance changed from its vacant aspect to one full of cunning, as the party from the cutter moved off, but it became dull and semi-idiotic again, for Gurr turned sharply round.

'Here, my lad, where's your master?'

'Eh?'

'I say, where's your master?'

'Aren't in ; mebbe he's out in the fields.'

Gurr turned away impatiently again, and signing to his men to follow, they all began to tramp up the steep track leading toward the Hoze, with the rabbits scuttling away among the furze, and showing their white cottony tails for a moment as they darted down into their holes.

Dick followed last, shaking his head, and looking very much dissatisfied, or kept on looking back at Jemmy, who stood like a statue, resting his chin upon the shaft of his pitchfork, watching him go away.

'I dunno,' muttered Dick, 'and a man can't be sure. There was nowt to see and nowt to hear, and of course one couldn't smell it, but seems to me as that ugly-looking fisherman chap knows where our Mr. Raystoke is. Yah, I hates half-bred uns ! If a man's a labourer, let him be a labourer ; and if he's a fisherman, let him be a fisherman. Man can't be two things, and it looks queer.'

An argument which did not have much force when self-applied, for Dick suddenly recollected that he was very skilful with the scissors, and knew that he was the regular barber of the crew, and as this came to his mind he took off his cap and gave his head a vicious scratch.

'Never mind the rabbits, lads,' cried Gurr angrily ; we want to find Mr. Raystoke.'

The men closed up together, and mastered their desire to go hunting, to make a change from the salt beef and pork fare, and soon after they came suddenly upon Sir Risdon and his lady, the latter, who looked weak and ill, leaning on her husband's arm.

Gurr saluted, and stated his business, while the baronet, who had turned sallower and more careworn than his lot, drew a breath full of relief.

One of your ship boys?' he said.

'A lad, looking like a common sailor, and wearing a red cap.'

'No,' said Sir Risdon. 'I have seen no one answering to the description here.'

'Beg pardon, sir, but can you, as a gentleman, assure me that he is not here?'

'Certainly,' said Sir Risdon. 'You have seen no one? he continued, turning to Lady Graeme.

The lady shook her head.

'That's enough, sir; but may I ask you, if you do see or hear anything of such a lad, you will send a messenger off to the cutter?'

'It is hardly right to enlist me in the search for one of your deserters,' said Sir Risdon coldly.

'Yes, sir, but he is not a deserter; and the fact is, we are afraid the lad has run alongside o' the smugglers, and come to grief.'

'Surely!' cried Sir Risdon excitedly. 'No, no,—you must be mistaken. A boyish prank. No one about here would injure a boy.'

'Humph!' ejaculated Gurr, looking at the baronet searchingly. 'Glad you think so well of 'em, sir. But I suppose you'll grant that the people about here would not be above a bit of smuggling?'

Sir Risdon was silent.

'And would run a cargo of brandy or silk?'

'I suppose there is a good deal of smuggling on the coast,' said Sir Risdon coldly, as he thought of his vault.

'Yes sir, there is, and it will go hard with the people who are caught having any dealings with the smugglers.'

Lady Graeme looked ghastly.

'What would you say, sir, if I were to order my men, in the king's name, to search your place?'

Sir Risdon dared not trust himself to speak, but darted an agonised glance at his wife.

'However, sir, I'm not on that sort of business now,' continued Gurr sternly. 'Want to find that boy. Good day. Now, my lads.'

The men marched off, and Sir Risdon stood watching them.

'Ah, Risdon,' and Lady Graeme, 'how could you let yourself be dragged into these dreadful deeds!'

'Don't blame me,' he said sadly. 'I loathe the whole business, but when I saw my wife and child suffering almost from want of the very necessaries of life, and the temptation came in the shape of presents from that man, I could not resist — I was too weak. I listened to his insidious persuasion, and tried to make myself believe that I was guiltless, as I owned no fealty to King George. But I am justly punished, and never again will I allow myself to be made an accessory to these lawless deeds.'

'But tell me,' she whispered, 'have they any of their goods secreted there now?'

'I do not know.'

'You do not know?'

'No. The only way in which I could allow myself to act was to keep myself in complete ignorance of the going and coming of these people. I might suspect, but I would never satisfy myself by watching; and I can say now honestly, I do not know whether they have still goods lying there or have taken them away.'

'But Celia—keep it from her.'

'Of course.'

'And about the missing boy. Surely, Risdon, they would not'—

Lady Graeme did not finish, but gave her husband a piercing look.

'Don't ask me,' he said sadly. 'Many of the men engaged in the smuggling are desperate wretches, and if they feared betrayal they would not scruple, I'm afraid, to strike down any one in the way of their escape.'

Lady Graeme shuddered, and they went together into the house, just as Celia came across the wood at the back, in company with the dog.

CHAPTER XVII.

GURR continued his search till it was quite dark, and then tramped his men back to the cove, where the boat-keeper was summoned, and the boat with her crew, saving Dick, were sent back to the cutter, one of the men bearing a message from Gurr to say that he was going to stay ashore till he had found Mr. Raystoke, and asking the lieutenant to send the boat back for him if he did not approve.

It was a very dark row back to the cutter, but her lights shone out clearly over the smooth sea, forming good beacons for the men to follow till the boat was run alongside.

'Got them, Mr. Gurr?' came from the deck.

'No sir, and Mr. Gurr's stopping at one of the fishermen's cottages ashore to keep on the search.'

'Tut, tut!' ejaculated the lieutenant as he turned away and began to pace the deck.

'Beg'n' pardon, sir, Mr. Gurr said'—

'Well, well, well, what did Mr. Gurr say? Pity he did not do more and not say so much.'

'Said as his dooty, sir, and would you send the boat for him if you did not think he'd done right.'

'No, sir! His Majesty's boats are wanted for other

purposes than running to and fro to fetch him aboard. Let him stay where he is till he finds Mr. Raystoke and brings him back aboard.'

'Dear, dear,' muttered the lieutenant as he walked to and fro. 'To think of the boy being missing like this.—Now you, sirs, in with that boat.—Where can he be? Not the lad to go off on any prank.—There, go below and get something to eat, my lads.—All comes of being sent into a miserable little boat like this to hunt smugglers.'

'Ahoy!' came from forward.

'What's that?' cried the lieutenant, and an answer came from out of the blackness ahead.

'What boat's that?' shouted the man on the watch.

'Mine,' came in a low growl.

'What is it?'

'Want to see the skipper.'

There was a little bustle forward, in the midst of which a boat came up alongside, and the man in it was allowed to come on board.

He was a big, broad-shouldered, heavy fellow, with rough black beard and dark eyes, which glowered at those around as a lanthorn was held up by one of the men.

'Where's the skipper?' he growled.

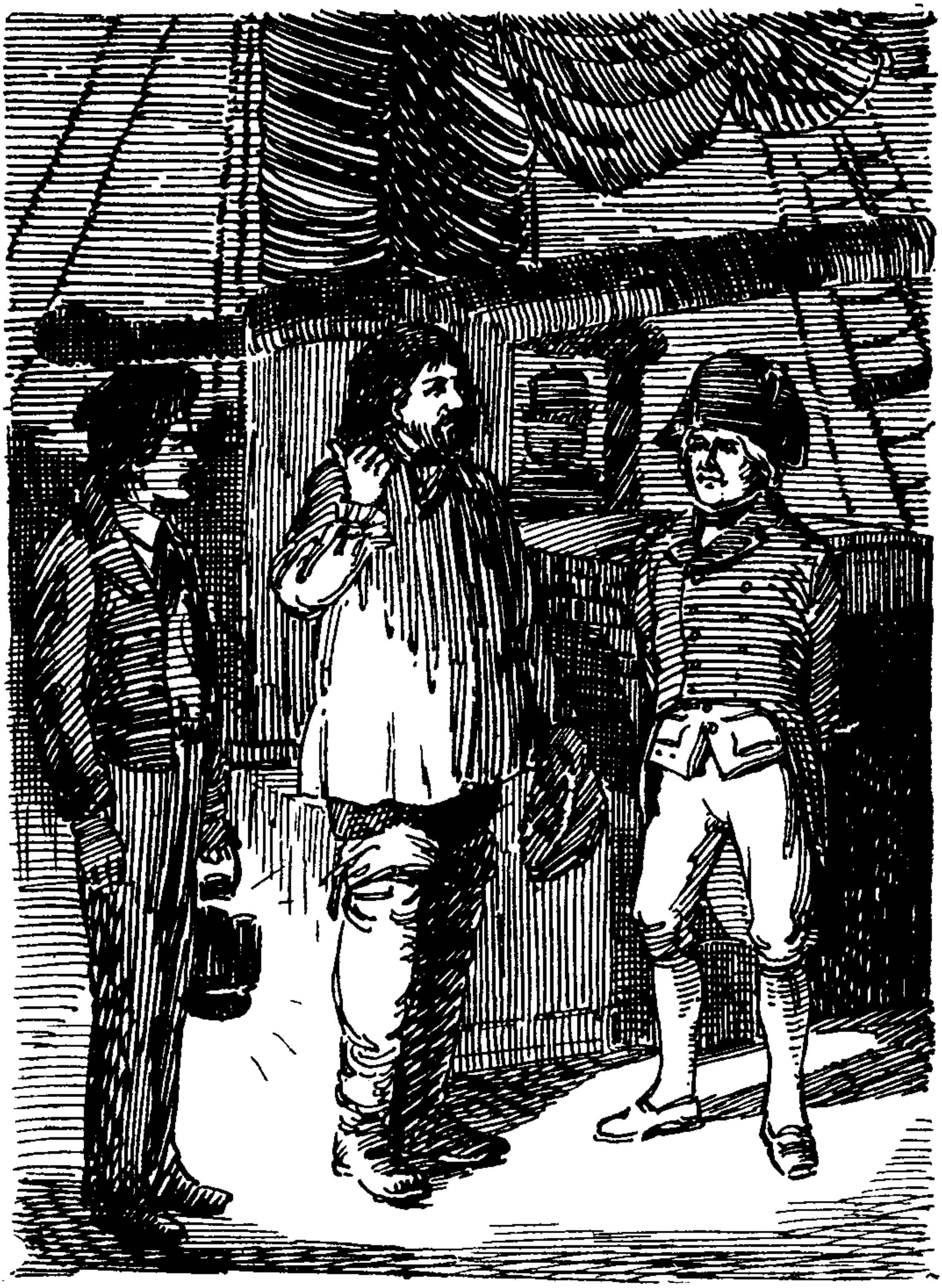
'Bring the man aft,' cried the lieutenant.

'This way.'

'All right, mate; I can find my way; I aren't a baby,' said the man as he took three or four strides, lifting up his big fisherman's boots, and setting them heavily down upon the deck as if they were something separate from him which he had brought on board.

'Now, my man, brought news of him?' cried the lieutenant eagerly.

'Eh?'



"HE JERKED HIS THUMB"

And the great fellow seemed to tower over the little commander.

'I say, have you brought news of the boy?'

'What boy?'

'Haven't you come to tell me where he is?'

'Here, what yer talking about?' growled the man. 'I aren't come 'bout no boys.'

'Then, pray, why have you come?'

'Send them away,' said the man in a hoarse whisper.

He jerked his thumb over his shoulder, and the lieutenant was about to give an order but altered his mind, for he suspected the man's mission, not an unusual one in those days.

'Come into my cabin, sir,' he said imperiously, and as he turned and strutted off, making the most of his inches, the giant—for such he was by comparison—stumbled after him, making the deck echo to the sound of his great boots.

'Now, sir,' said the lieutenant haughtily, 'what is your business?'

The man leaned forward, and there was a leer on his bearded face seen by the dull swinging oil-lamp, as, half covering his mouth, he whispered hoarsely behind his hands—

'Like Hollands gin, master?'

'What do you mean, sir?' cried the lieutenant. 'Speak out, for I have no time to lose.'

'Oh, I'll speak plainly enough,' growled the man; 'on'y do you like it?'

'Do you mean that a foreign vessel is going to land a quantity of Hollands to-night?'

'Never said nothing o' the sort, Master Orficer. Why, if I was to come and say a thing like that, and folks ashore knowed on it, there'd be a haxiden.'

'What do you mean, sir?'

'Some un would run up agin me atop o' the cliff, and I should go over, and there'd be an end o' me.'

'You mean to say that if it was known that you informed, you would be in peril of your life?'

'No, I don't mean to say nothing o' the kind, master. I only says to you that there's going to be a drop to be got in a place I knows, and if you care to say to a chap like me—never you mind who he is—show me where this drop of Hollands gin is to be got, and I'll give you—for him, you know—fifty pounds, it would be done.'

'Look here, my lad, if you have got any valuable information to give, wouldn't it be better for you to speak out plainly?'

'Didn't come twenty mile in my boat and get here in the dark, for you to teach me how to ketch fish, Master Orficer.'

'Twenty miles!' said the lieutenant sharply; 'where are you from?'

'Out o' my boat as is made fast 'longside. Is it fifty pound or aren't it?'

'Fifty pound is a great deal of money, my man. Your information may not be worth fifty pence. Suppose the boat does not come?'

'Why, o' course, you wouldn't pay.'

'Oh, now I understand you. If we take the boat with the spirits I am to give you fifty pounds?'

'Me? Think I'm goin' to be fool enough to risk gettin' my neck broke for fifty pound? Nay, not me. You'll give it to me to give to him.'

'And where is he?'

'Never you mind, master.'

'Oh, well, there then; I'll give you the fifty pounds if I take the boat. Dutch?'

'P'raps. Shake hands on it.'

'Is that necessary?' said the lieutenant, glancing with distaste at the great outstretched palm.

'Ay, shake hands on it, and you being a gentleman, you'll say, 'pon your honour.'

'Oh, very well. There, upon my honour, we'll pay you if we take the boat.'

'Oh you'll take her, fast enough,' said the man with a hoarse chuckle. 'Yah! there's no fight in them. They'll chatter and jabber a bit, and their skipper 'll swear he'll do all sorts o' things, but you stick to the boat as soon as your lads are on board.'

'Trust me for that,' said the lieutenant. 'Now, then, when is the cargo to be run?'

'T'night.'

'And where?'

'Never you mind wheer. Get up your anchor, and make sail; I'll take the helm.'

'What, do you think I am going to let a strange man pilot my vessel?'

'Yah!' growled the man; 'shan't you be there, and if I come any games, you've got pistols, aren't you? But just as you like.'

'Come on deck,' said the lieutenant. 'But one minute. I have lost a boy—gone ashore. Have you seen one?'

'Not I; lots o' boys about, soon get another!'

The man went clumping on deck, and stepped over the side into his boat.

'What are you going to do?' said the lieutenant sharply.

'Make her fast astarn.'

'Well, you need not have got into her, you could have led her round.'

'This here's my way,' said the man; and as the order was given to slip the anchor, with a small buoy left to mark its place, the informer secured his boat to one of the ring-bolts astern, and then drew close in; and mounted over the bulwark to stand beside the man at the helm.

'What do you propose doing?' said the lieutenant.

'Tellin' o' you what I wants done, and then you tells your lads.'

The lieutenant nodded, and in obedience to the suggestion of the man the stay-sail was hoisted; then up went the main-sail and jib, and the little cutter careened over to the soft land breeze as soon as she got a little way out from under the cliffs, which soon became invisible.

'Why, you aren't dowsed your lanthorns,' whispered the man. 'I'd have them down, and next time you have time just have down all your canvas, and get it tanned brown. Going about with lanthorns and white canvas is showing everybody where you are.'

After a time, as they glided on, catching a glimpse of a twinkling light or two on the shore, the man grew a little more communicative, and began to whisper bits of information and advice to the lieutenant.

'Tells me,' he said, 'that she's choke full o' Hollands gin and lace.'

'Indeed!' said the lieutenant eagerly.

'Ay, so that chap says. And there's plenty o' time, but after a bit I'd sarve out pistols and cutlasses to the lads; you won't have to use 'em, but it'll keep those Dutchies from showing fight.'

'That will all be done, my man.'

'Going to get out four or five mile, master, and then we can head round, and get clear o' the long race and the skerries. After that I shall run in, and we'll creep along

under the land. Good deep water for five-and-twenty miles there close under the cliff.'

'Then you are making for Clayblack Bay?'

'Ah, you'll see,' said the man surlily. 'As long as you get to where you can overhaul the boat when she comes in, you won't mind where it is, Mister Orficer. There's no rocks to get on, unless you run ashore, and tarn't so dark as you need do that, eh?'

'I can take care of that,' said the lieutenant sharply; and the cutter, now well out in the north-east wind then blowing, leaned over, and skimmed rapidly towards the dark sea.

The reef that stretched out from a point, and formed the race where the tide struck against the submerged rocks, and then rushed out at right angles to the shore, had been passed, and the cutter was steered on again through the clear dark night, slowly drawing nearer the dark shore line, till she was well in under the cliffs; with the result that the speed was considerably checked, but she was able to glide along at a short distance from the land, and without doubt invisible to any vessel at sea.

'There,' said the great rough fellow, after three hours' sailing; 'we're getting pretty close now. Bay opens just beyond that rock.'

'Where I'll lie close in, and wait for her,' said the lieutenant.

The man laughed softly.

'Thought I—I mean him—was to get fifty pounds, if you took the boat?'

'Yes.'

'Well, you must take her. Know what would happen if you went round that point into the bay?'

'Know what would happen?'

'I'll tell yer. Soon as you got round into the bay, some o' them ashore would see yer. Then up would go lights somewhere yonder on the hills, and the boat would go back.'

'Of course. I ought to have known better. Wait here then?'

'Well, I should, if I wanted to take her,' said the man coldly. 'And I should have both my boats ready for my men to jump in, and cut her off as soon as she gets close in to the beach. She'll come on just as the tide's turning, so as to have no fear of being left aground.'

'You seem to know a good deal about it, my lad?' said the little lieutenant.

'Good job for you,' was the reply, as the sails were lowered, and the cutter lay close in under the cliff waiting. The boats were down, the men armed, and the guns loaded, ready in case the smuggler vessel should attempt to escape.

Then followed a long and patient watch, in the most utter silence; for, in the stillness of such a calm night a voice travels far, and the lieutenant knew that a strange sound would be sufficient to alarm those for whom he was waiting, and send the boat away again to sea. He might overtake her, but would more probably lose her in the darkness, and see her at daybreak perhaps well within reach of a port where he dare not follow.

It was darker now, for clouds had come like a veil over the bright stars, but the night was singularly clear and transparent, as soon after eight bells the informer crept silently up to where the lieutenant was trying to make out the approach of the expected vessel.

The little officer started as the man touched his elbow,

so silently had he approached, and on looking down, he dimly made out that the man had divested himself of his heavy boots.

'Do be quiet, master,' whispered the great fellow. 'Can't 'ford to lose fifty pounds for fear o' getting one's feet cold. See anything?'

'No,' whispered the lieutenant, after sweeping his glass round.

'Tide serves, and she can't be long now. But two o' your chaps keep whispering for'ard, and it comes back off the cliff. No, no—don't shout at 'em. We daren't have a sound.'

'No,' replied the lieutenant; and he went softly forward toward where a group of men were leaning over the bulwarks, peering into the darkness and listening to the tide as it gurgled in and out of the rocks, little more than a hundred yards away.

'Strict silence, my lads, and the moment you get the word, over into your boats and lay ready. Are those rowlocks muffled?'

'Ay, ay, sir!' said the boatswain, who was to be in command of one of the boats.

'No bloodshed, my lads. Knock any man down who resists. Five minutes after you leave the side here ought to make the smuggler ours. Hush! keep your cheering till you've taken the boat.'

A low murmur ran round the side of the cutter, and every eye was strained as the little officer whispered,—

'A crown for the first man who sights her.'

After a while, the lieutenant mentally said,—

'I wish Mr. Raystoke was here, he and Gurr could go in the other boat. I wonder where the lad can be!'

He went cautiously aft along the starboard side of his

vessel, looking hard at the frowning mass of darkness under which they lay, and thinking how dangerous their position would have been had the wind blown from the opposite quarter. But now they were in complete shelter, with the little cutter rising and falling softly on the gentle swell and drifting slowly with the tide, so that the *White Hawk's* head was pointing seaward.

He glanced over the side to see that the boats were in readiness, and then went aft without a sound, till all at once he kicked against something in the darkness beneath the larboard bulwark, to which he had crossed, and nearly fell headlong.

'What's—here? Who was— Oh, it's those confounded boots. Hush, there; silence!'

He said the last words hastily, for the crew made noise enough to startle any one within range, and the sounds were being followed by the hurried whisper of those who came running aft.

'Back to your places, every one,' he said; and then the men drew off, becoming invisible almost directly, for the darkness was now intense, the lanthorns carefully hidden below, and once more all was still, and the little officer rested his glass on the bulwark and carefully swept the sea.

'Stupid idiot!' he said to himself. 'Lucky for him he isn't one of the crew. No, not a sign of anything.'

But knowing that seeing was limited enough, he put his hand to his ear and stood leaning over the side, listening for a full ten minutes, before, with an impatient ejaculation, he turned to speak to the informer, who was not aft but probably forward among the men.

He walked forward.

'Where's that man?' he whispered to the first sailor he

encountered, who, like the rest, was eagerly watching seaward.

'Went aft, sir.'

The little officer went aft, but the fisherman was not there, and he passed back along the starboard side, going right forward among the crew.

'Where is the fisherman?' he said.

'Went aft, sir,' came from every one he encountered; and, feeling annoyed at the trouble it gave him, Mr. Brough went aft again, to notice now that there was no man at the helm.

He walked forward again.

'Here!' he cried in an angry whisper, 'who was at the helm?'

'I, your honour,' said a voice.

'Then why are you here, sir?'

'That fisherman chap told me you said I was to go forward, sir, as he'd take a spell now, ready for running her round the head into the bay.'

'Where is that man?'

There was no reply, and more quickly than he had moved for months, the lieutenant trotted aft, and looked over the stern for the fisherman's boat.

It was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIEUTENANT BROUGH went into a fit of passion. Not a noisy, seagoing fit of passion, full of loud words, such as are not found in dictionaries, but a rising and falling, swelling and collapsing, silent fit of passion, as moment by moment he realised more and more that he had been victimised, and that he had been sent forward to quiet the men so as to give the big rough fellow an opportunity to creep over into his boat and cut the painter by which it was made fast, and let it glide away on the tide till it was safe to thrust an oar over astern, and, using it like a fish does its tail, paddle softly away close under the rocks to some hole, or perhaps round into the bay.

For a moment the lieutenant thought of manning the boats and sending in pursuit, but he knew that such an act would be madness; and, accepting his position, he suddenly gave the order for four men to go into each boat, and begin to tow the cutter, while a few of the crew put out the sweeps to get her a little farther from the cliff to catch the breeze.

Half an hour later the boats were ordered in, sail was being set, and the cutter was again moving swiftly through the water.

But the wind was dead ahead now, and though the *White Hawk* could use her wings well even in such a breeze, and sail very close, it was far different work getting back to coming away.

The men were not forbidden to talk, and they were not long in grasping the situation, while their commanding officer went up and down the deck, fuming and taking himself to task more seriously than any captain had done since he first went to sea.

'Only to think of me, after what I have learned of their shifts and tricks, letting myself be taken in by such a transparent dodge. Oh, it's maddening!'

He looked up at the sails, and longed to clap on more, but it was useless. The little craft was doing her best, and the water surged under her bow as she took a long stretch seaward, before tacking for the land.

'There's not a doubt of it,' muttered the lieutenant. 'I know it—I'm sure of it. I deserve to lose my rank. How could I have been such a blind, idiotic baby!'

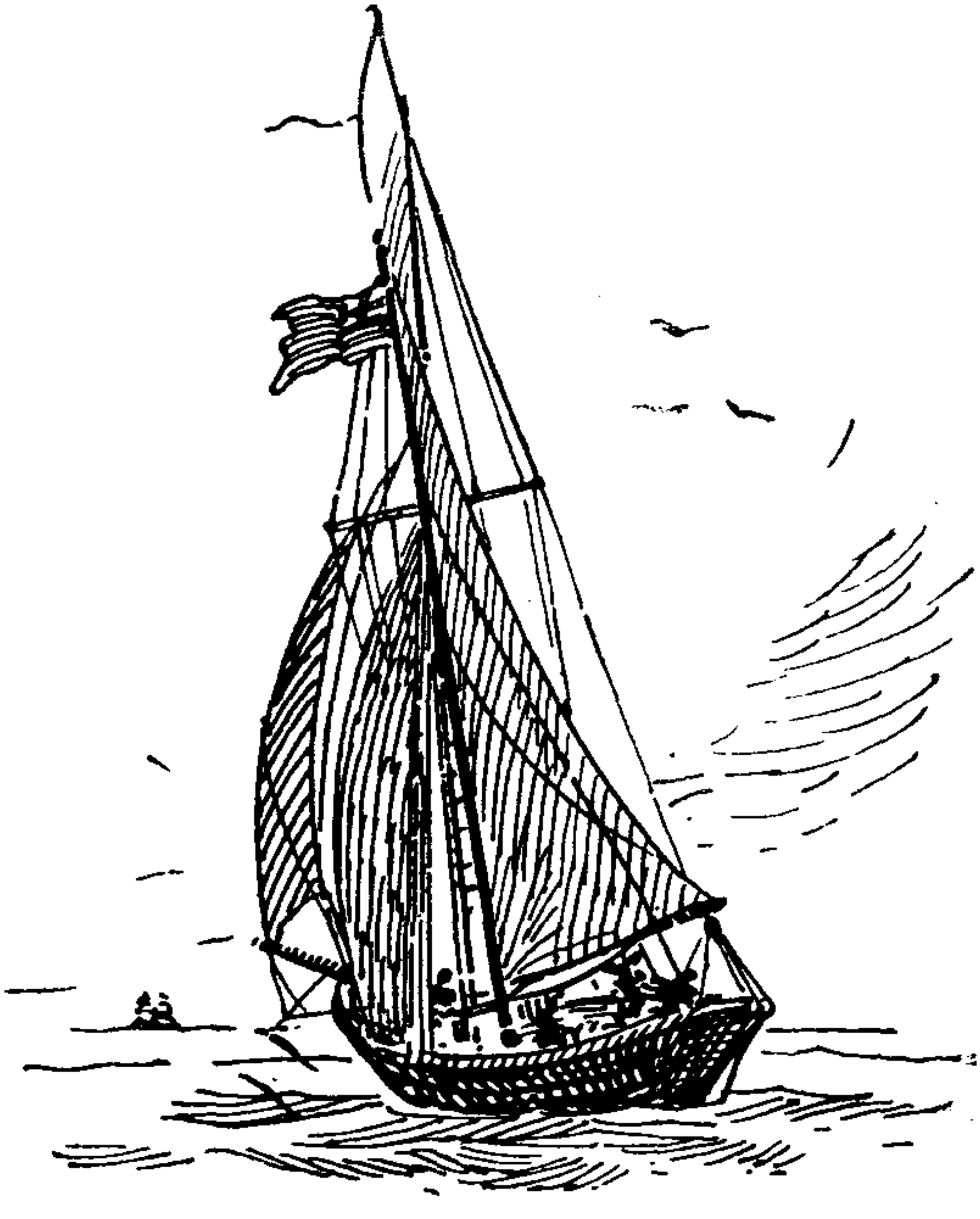
He was obliged to confess, though, that the trick, if such it proved to be, had been well planned and executed, and the stipulation of the man that he should be paid fifty pounds if the boat was captured had completely thrown dust into his eyes.

More than once, as the cutter rushed on through the darkness, he found himself wondering whether, after all, he was wrong, and that the man had slipped away, so as to avoid being recognised when the smuggling vessel was captured, for, if seen, he would be a marked man.

'And, perhaps, in a few minutes, the smuggler would have been coming into the little bay, I should have taken her, redeemed my reputation, been looked upon as a smart officer, my crew would have got a nice bit of prize

money, and the fellow would have come stealthily some night for his reward.—I've done wrong. Would there be time to go back?'

He was on the point of bidding the men ''bout ship,' when a firm belief in his having been cheated came over him, and he kept on.



Then there was another season of doubt—and then of assurance—another of doubt, till the poor little fellow grew half bewildered, and gazed around, longing for the daylight and his old moorings, so that he might send a boat ashore, and carefully examine the ground, to see if he could trace any signs of landing having gone on.

At last, just at daybreak, the cutter was about to make a dash, and run right down for her old berth, when one of the men shouted 'Sail ho!'

He raised his glass, and there, hull down, were the three masts of a lugger, a Frenchman without a doubt, and his suspicions had their just confirmation.

His immediate thought was to give chase, but the swift sailing vessel was well away with a favourable wind, and she would most probably get across the Channel before he could overtake her, and even if he were so lucky as to catch up to her, what then? She would not have a keg or bale on board which would give him an excuse for detaining her; and wrinkling up his brow, he went on more satisfied that he had been deluded away, so as to give the *chasse marée* an opportunity to come in and rapidly run her cargo.

He saw it all now. No sooner had he passed round the race, than lights had been shown, and the lugger was run in. He felt as certain as if he had seen everything, and he ground his teeth with vexation.

'Wait till I get my chance!' he muttered. 'I'll sink the first smuggler I meet; and as to that blackavised scoundrel who came and cheated me as he did—oh, if I could only see him hung!'

A couple of hours later, after seeing the lugger's masts and sails slowly disappear, the cutter was once more at her old moorings, and leaving the boatswain in charge, the lieutenant had himself rowed ashore, to land upon the ledge, and carefully search the rocks for some sight of a cargo having been landed.

But the smugglers and their shore friends had been more careful this time, and search where they would, the cutter's men could find no traces of anything of the kind, and the lieutenant had himself rowed back to the cutter, keeping the boat alongside, ready to send along shore to the cove to seek for tidings of Gurr and Dick

but altering his mind, he had the little vessel unmoored once more to run back the six miles along the coast till the cutter was abreast of the cove,—the first place where it seemed possible for a boat to land,—and here he sent a crew ashore to bring his two men off.

CHAPTER XIX.

'HOW many horses has your father got?'

'Three.'

'What colour are they?'

'Black, white, and grey.'

'Turn round three times, and catch whom you may.'

That, as everyone knows, is the classical way of beginning the game of Blind Man's Buff; and supposing that the blinded man *pro tem.* is properly bandaged, and cannot get a squint of light up by the side of his nose, and also supposing that he confuses himself by turning round the proper number of times honestly, he will be in profound darkness, and in utter ignorance of the direction of door, window, or the salient objects in the room.

Take another case. Suppose a lad to have eaten a hearty supper of some particularly hard pastry. The probabilities are that he will either have the peculiar form of dream known as nightmare, or some time in the night he will get out of bed, and go wandering about his room in the darkness, to awake at last, cold, confused, and asking himself where he is, without the slightest ability to give a reasonable answer to his question.

It has fallen to the lot of some people to be lost in a fog—words, these, which can only be appreciated

by those who have passed through a similar experience.

The writer has gone through these experiences more than once, and fully realised the peculiar sensation of helplessness, confusion, and brain numbing which follows. Dark as pitch is mostly a figure of speech, for the obscurity is generally relieved by something in the form of dull light which does enable a person to see his hand before him; but the blackness around, when Archibald Raystoke began to come back to his senses, would have left pitch far behind as to depth of tint.

His head ached, and there was a feeling in it suggestive of the contents having been turned into brain-fritters in a pan—fritters which had bubbled and turned brown, and then been burned till they were quite black.

He opened his eyes, and then put his hands up to feel if they were open.

They were undoubtedly, and he hurt them in making the test, for he half fancied, and he had a confused notion, that a great handkerchief had been tied over them. But though they were undoubtedly open he could not see. In fact, when he closed them, strange as it may sound, he felt as if he could see better, for there were a number of little spots of light sailing up and down and round and round, like the tiny sparks seen in tinder before the fire which has consumed is quite extinct.

He lay still, not thinking but trying to think, for his mind was in the condition described by the little girl who, suffering from a cold, said, 'Please, ma, one side of my nose won't go.'

Archy Raystoke's mind would not go, and for a long time he lay motionless.

His memory began to work again in his back, for he

gradually became conscious of feeling something there, and after suffering the inconvenience for a long time, he thrust his hand under his spine and drew out a piece of iron, sharp-edged and round like a hoop.

He felt better after that, and fell to wondering why he had brought his little hoop to bed with him, and also how it was that his little hoop, which he used to trundle, had become iron instead of wood.

The exertion of moving the hoop made him wince, for his back was sore and his arms felt strained as if he had been beaten.

His mind began 'to go' a little more, and he had to turn back mentally; but he could not do that, so he made an effort to go forward, and wondered how soon it would be morning, and the window curtains at the foot of the bed would show streaks of sunshine between.

Time passed on and he still lay perfectly quiet, for he did not feel the slightest inclination to move after his late efforts, which had produced a sensation of the interior of his skull beginning to bubble up with fire or hot lead rolling about. But as that pain declined he felt cold, and after a great deal of hesitation he suddenly stretched out his hands to pull up the clothes.

There were none.

His natural inference had been, as he was lying there upon his back, that he must be in bed; but now he found that, though there were no bed-clothes, he was wearing his own, only upon feeling about with no little pain they did not seem like his clothes.

That was as far as he could get then, but some time after there came a gleam of light in his understanding, and he recalled the mists that hung about the Channel.

Of course he was in one of those thick mists, and he

had gone to sleep on—on—what had he gone to sleep on?

The light died out, and it was a long time before, like a flash, came the answer.

The deck of the cutter!

He made a movement to start up in horror, for he knew that he must have gone to sleep during his watch, and his pain and stiffness were like a punishment for doing so disgraceful a thing.

'What will Mr. Brough say if he knows?' he thought, and then he groaned, for the pain caused by the movement was unbearable.

At last his mind began to clear, and he set himself to wonder with more force. This was not the deck, for he could feel that he was lying on what was like an old sail, and where his hand lay was not wood, but cold hard stone, with a big crack full of small scraps.

The lad shook his head and then uttered a low moan, for the pain was terrible.

It died off though as he lay, still trying hard to think, failing—trying in a half dreamy way, and finally thrilling all over, for he remembered everything now—the smugglers—the scene in the darkness of the room where he was imprisoned—the coming of that boy who jeered at him till they engaged in a fierce struggle, with the result all plainly pictured, till he was stunned or had swooned away.

These thoughts were almost enough to stun him again, and he lay there with a hot sensation of rage against the treacherous young scoundrel who had lured him on to that struggle, and held him so thoroughly fixed against the bars till he was secured and bound. Yes, and his eyes were bandaged. He could recall it now.

'Oh, only wait till I get my chance!' he muttered, and he involuntarily clenched his fists.

He lay perfectly quiet again though, for he found that any exertion brought on mental confusion as well as pain, and he wanted to think about his position.

It came by degrees more and more, and as he was able to think with greater clearness, he found an explanation of the fancy he had felt, that he must be ill and sea-sick again, and that somebody had been giving him brandy.

Part was fevered imagination, part was reality, for there could be no doubt about that faint odour of spirits. It was brandy, but brandy in smuggled kegs, and the scoundrels of smugglers had shut him up in the vault with their kegs.

'Well, they have not killed me,' he said to himself with a little laugh. 'They dared not try that, and all I have to do now is to escape, if Mr. Brough does not send the lads to fetch me out.'

He went through the whole time now since his landing; thought of what a disgraceful thing it was for a titled gentleman to mix himself up with smuggling, and what a revelation he would have for the lieutenant and the master who had been so easily deluded by Sir Risdon's bearing.

Then he thought of Celia, and how bright and innocent she had seemed; putting away all thoughts of her, however, directly as his angry feeling increased against Ram and this treacherous girl.

He must have been for hours thinking, often in a drowsy, half-confused way, but rousing up from time to time to feel his resentment growing against Ram, who seemed to him now to be the personification of the whole smuggling gang.

By degrees he grew conscious of a fresh pain, one that was certainly not produced by his late struggles, or by stiffness from lying upon an old sail stretched upon the damp floor of a vault.

As he thought this last, he asked himself why he called it the damp floor of a vault. For it was not damp, but perfectly dry, and below the scraps of stone in the seam there was fine dust.

But the said pain was increasing, and there was no mistaking it. He was hungry, decidedly hungry; and paradoxically, as he grew better he grew worse, the pain in the head being condensed in a more central region, where nature carries on a kind of factory of bone, muscle, flesh, blood, and generally health and strength.

Suddenly Archy recalled that his legs had been bound, and he sat up to find that they were free now, and if he liked he could rise and go to the grated window and call for help.

'If I do, they'll come down and stuff a handkerchief in my mouth again,' he thought, 'and it is no use to do that. I may as well wait till I hear our men's voices, and then I'll soon let them know where I am.'

He got on his feet, feeling stiff and uncomfortable, and then tried to make out where the grated window was, but the darkness was absolute, and he stretched out one foot and his hands, as he began to move cautiously along, feeling his way till he kicked against a loose stone.

This arrested him, and he tried in another direction for his foot to come in contact with what seemed to be round, and proved to be a spar lying in company with some carefully folded and rope-bound sails.

'The old rascal!' thought Archy, as he mentally pictured the stern, sad countenance of Sir Risdon.

'Why, he must have a lugger of his own, and keep his stores in here.'

A little feeling about convinced him that the window of the vault could not be behind the pile of boat-gear against which he had stumbled, and he moved slowly off again, to stop at the end of a yard or two, feeling about with one foot.

'Why, I'm not shut up!' he cried joyously. 'I'm out on the ledge. They must have laid me here to be fetched off by the boat. Suppose the tide had risen while I was asleep!'

But the joyous feeling went off as he stared about him. It had been dark enough in a dense fog, but it did not feel dark and cold now, as if there was a dense fog. Everything seemed dry, and though he listened attentively, he could not hear the washing of the waves among the rocks, nor smell the cool, moist, sea-weedy odour of the coast. Instead of that a most unmistakable smell of brandy came into his nostrils.

And yet he seemed to be standing on that ledge close down to the water, for as he stooped down now he could trace with his hand one of the huge, curled-up shell-fish turned to the stone in which it was embedded, while, as he felt about, there was another and another larger still.

He listened again.

No; he was not on the seashore. He must be in the vault beneath Sir Risdon's house, and though he had not noticed it, the floor must be paved with a layer of stones similar to those found where the little kegs had been left.

He went cautiously on with outstretched hands through the intense darkness, and his feet traced the flat curls of stone again and again, but he did not find any wall, and now, as he made up his mind to go back to where he had

been when he first awoke, he found that he had not the faintest idea as to which direction he ought to take.

As he grew more able to move and act, the sense of confusion which suddenly arrested him was terrible—almost maddening.

Where was he? What was here on all sides? It could not be the cellar, as he went in one direction or the other toward the walls, and he stood at last resting, in the most utter bewilderment of mind and helplessness of body possible to conceive, while a curious feeling of awe began to steal over him.

The smugglers had not dared to kill him or throw him into the sea, as he had heard of them doing on more than one occasion, but as far as he could make out they had cast him down into some terrible place to die.

The idea was terrible, and unable to contain himself he took a step or two in one direction, then in another, and stopped short, not daring to stir for fear some awful chasm such as he had seen among the rocks should be yawning at his feet, and he should fall headlong down.

He stopped to wipe the cold perspiration away that was gathering on his brow, and then, trying to keep himself cool, he stood thinking, and finally, in utter weariness, sat down.

'I wish I wasn't such a coward,' said the young midshipman, half aloud. 'It's like being a child to be frightened because it's dark. What's that!'

He started up.

'*That*' was a gleam of light some distance off, shining on the rugged walls of a vast chamber or set of chambers. He could only dimly see this, for the light was but feeble, and the bearer hidden behind the rugged pillars which supported the roof; but it was evidently coming nearer,

and as it approached he could see that he was in a vast cavernous, flat-ceiled place, which appeared to have been a quarry, from which masses of stone had been hewn, the floor here and there being littered with refuse of all sorts and sizes.

As the light came on, the midshipman made out that quite a store of spars, ropes, and blocks lay at a short distance, and that more dimly seen was a large stack of tubs, from which doubtless emanated the odour of brandy.

Archy's first idea was to go and meet the bearers of the light, but on second thoughts he decided to stand upon his dignity and let them come to him, and as the thought occurred to him that the visit might be of an inimical nature, his hand stole into his breast in search of his dirk. Vainly though: the weapon was gone.

All this time, as if the bearers were coming very leisurely, the light slowly approached, and as the midshipman more fully grasped the fact that he must be either in a stone quarry or a mine, he saw that the light was an ordinary horn lanthorn, and from the shadows it cast he could see that there were two people, one of whom was carrying something weighty on his shoulders.

This soon resolved itself into four kegs, slung two and two, the bearer panting under their weight, while his companion held the light low down, so that he could see where to plant his feet and avoid the corners of the huge square pillars which supported the roof.

Neither of the pair seemed to pay any attention to him; in fact, the midshipman was doubtful whether he was seen as he stood back waiting till they had passed him, and then hesitated as to whether he should make for the entrance and escape.

Through the black darkness, not knowing which way he

should go, perhaps to fall down some shaft such as was sure to be in a place like this? No; he could not risk the journey without a light, and he stood waiting and trying to make out the shadowy figures, one of whom looked strangely uncouth beneath his load, while the other was quite short.

Archy had not long to wait before the pair halted by the stack of kegs, to which the four carried by the man were added, and this done they turned and came toward him.

At this moment, after excitedly watching them, the midshipman became convinced.

The bearer of the lanthorn was his young enemy—the boy.

CHAPTER XX.

ARCHY RAYSTOKE looked round him for a weapon, but the only thing visible was a stone, and not feeling disposed to descend to such a barbarous means of offence or defence, he drew himself up, burning with indignation, but waiting for the others to commence speaking.

He had not long to wait.

'Hullo, sailor!' cried Ram; 'like some milk?'

'You rascal!' burst out Archy, taking a step toward the lad, but feeling directly a strong hand upon his arm to hold him back.

'What's the matter?' growled the owner of the hand.

'The matter will be that you two will be hung at the yardarm some fine morning. How dare you shut me up in this hole!'

'Hung for shutting you up here?' cried the boy. 'We shall have to hang him then, Jemmy, after all.'

'Ay, lad,' said the man. 'When'll we do it; now?'

'Now!' cried the midshipman. 'Do you think you are going to frighten me with such talk? Show me the way out of this place directly.'

'Ram, lad,' said Jemmy Dadd, with a cackling laugh; 'when yer ketches a wild thing, and puts him in a cage, he

begins to bang hisself agen the sides, and knocks his head agen the bars, and if he could talk he'd go on just like that 'ere. Then you keeps quiet, and don't give him



nothing to eat, and after a day or two you can do what you like with him.'

'Then we'd better take back the basket, Jemmy, eh?

'Ay, lad, that's it. Leave him in the dark a bit to cool him down.'

'You scoundrels!' cried the lad in frenzy. 'If you do not show me the way out, I'll shout for help, and when it does come, I'll take care your punishment shall be ten times worse.'

'Ah, do,' said Ram, laughing. 'Won't bring the roof down, will it, Jemmy?'

'Nay, not it, lad. Come on.'

'Wait a bit,' said Ram.—'I say, didn't tell me whether you'd like a bottle o' milk?'

Archy felt as if he would like to fly at the boy, the very mention of the milk exasperating him to such an extent. But at every movement he felt himself more tightly held, and knowing from sad experience that it was waste of energy to contend with the iron-muscled fellow who gripped his arm, he smothered his anger.

He did not speak, but as Ram held up the light, Archy's countenance told tales of the passion struggling in his breast for exit, and the boy grinned.

'I say, do have a bottle o' milk,' he said; 'it's fresh and warm. Mother said it would do you good.'

'Nay, lad, don't give him none till he's grow'd civil, and don't talk about hanging on us.'

'I brought you a bottle o' new milk and some hot bread, on'y it's getting cold now, and some butter and cold ham. Do have some.'

Archy ground his teeth: he felt as if he would give anything for some food, and the very mention of the tasty viands made his mouth water, but he only stamped his foot and tried to shake himself free.

'I am a king's officer,' he shouted, 'and order you to let me go!'

'Hear that, Jemmy? Hold him tight.'

'Ay! He's tight enough!' cried the man, throwing a

sturdy arm about the middy's waist, and holding him back as he tried to get at Ram.

'No good to give orders here,' said the latter, grinning. 'You're only a king's officer when you're aboard your little bit of a cutter.'

'Will you let me out of this place?'

'If I let you go will you tell your skipper about what you've seen?'

'Yes,' cried Archy fiercely.

'Then what a dumble head you must be to think we'll let you go. Won't do, little officer; will it, Jemmy?'

'Do! Better chuck him off the cliff.'

'What!' cried the midshipman fiercely.

'Chuck you off the cliff. What do you mean by coming interfering here with honest men getting their living? We never did nothing to you.'

'You scoundrel!' cried Archy, 'how dare you say that? You know you are breaking the laws by smuggling, and you are doing worse by kidnapping me.'

'Should have kep' away then,' growled the man.

'Don't speak cross to him, Jemmy. He's very sorry he came now, and if I let him go he'll promise not to say a word about what he has seen; won't you now, mate?'

'No!' roared Archy.

'Oh, well then, Jemmy's right. We shall have to tame you down.'

'Show me the way out of this.'

'Come along then,' said Ram with a sneering laugh. 'But you'd better promise.'

'Show me the way out.'

'Won't you have some milk first?'

'Do you hear me?'

'And bread and butter, home-made?

'Will you show me the way out.'

'Nor no ham? You must be hungry!'

'You scoundrel!' cried Archy, who was exasperated almost beyond bearing. 'Show me the way out.'

'Oh, very well, this way, then. Hold him tight, Jemmy.'

'Ay, ay, lad!'

'This way, my grand officer without your fine clothes,' said Ram tauntingly, as he held down the lanthorn to show the rough stone floor. 'Mind how you put your feet, and take care. Why don't you come?'

Archy made a start forward, but he was tightly held.

'Why don't you come, youngster?' cried Ram mockingly, as he held the lanthorn more closely. 'There, now then, mind how you come.'

Whang!

The dull sound was followed by a faint clatter, and all was black darkness again, for raging with hunger and annoyance as the boy was, tightly held, the light down just in front of him, without any warning Archy drew back slightly, delivered one quick, sharp kick full at the lanthorn, and it flew right away into the darkness.

'Well!' ejaculated Ram in his first moment of surprise. Then he burst into a roar of laughter which echoed from the roof.

'You're a nice un,' growled Jemmy.

'Let him go, and come on,' cried Ram.

A sudden thought struck the middy.

'No, you don't,' he muttered, as he wrenched himself round and clung to the man. 'If you are going from here, I go too.'

'Got the lanthorn, Ram, lad?' cried Jemmy.

'No; and it's smashed now. Come away.'

'Let go, will you?' growled Jemmy.

For answer the midshipman held on more tightly.

'Do you hear? Come on!' cried Ram.

'He won't let go. He's holding on legs, wings and teeth. Come and help.'

'Get out: you can manage him. Put him on his back.'

No sooner were the words uttered than, as he struggled there in the black darkness, Archy felt himself twisted up off his feet. There was a shake, a wrench, and as he clung tightly to the man, his arms were dragged, as it felt to him, half out of their sockets, and he was thrown, to come down fortunately on his hands and knees.

For a few moments he felt half stunned by the shake, but recovering himself he leaped up and began to follow the retiring footsteps which were faintly heard.

He knew the direction, and went on with outstretched hands to find the way, checked directly by their coming in contact with one of the great pillars of stone.

But he felt his way round this, got to the other side, listened, made out which way the footsteps were going, followed on, and caught his feet against something which threw him forward on to a pile of broken stone.

He got up again, and felt his way cautiously to the right, for the stones rose like a bank or barrier in his way, and he went many yards without finding a way through.

Then feeling that he had taken the wrong turning, he retraced his steps as quickly as he could, going on and on without avail and never stopping, He was just in time to save himself from another fall as he heard a dull bang as if a heavy door were closed, followed by a curious rattling sound, as of large pieces of slate falling down and banging against wood. Then came a dull echoing, which died off in whispers, and all was perfectly still.

'The cowards!' cried Archy, as he fully realised that

his gaolers had escaped from him. 'How brutal to leave a fellow shut up in a hole like this. 'Tis horrible; and enough to drive one mad. Ugh!' he now cried, 'if I only could get out!'

He sat down upon the rough stones, feeling weak, and perspiring profusely. It was many hours now since he had tasted food, and in his misery and despair he felt that he should be starved to death before his gaolers came again.

'How dare they!' he cried passionately. 'A king's officer too! Oh, if I could only be once more along with the lads, and with a chance to go at them! I think I should be able to fight.'

Then as he sat on the stones he began to cool down and grow less fierce in his ideas. In other words, he came down from pistols and sharp-edged cutlasses to fists, and felt such an intense longing to get at Ram, that his fists involuntarily clenched and his fingers tingled.

'Wait a bit,' he said fiercely,—'wait a bit.'

'Yes, I shall have to wait a bit,' he said sadly, as he rose from the stones. 'Oh, how weak and hungry I am! It's as if I was going to be ill. I wonder whether I could track where they went out.'

'Not now,' he said,—'not now;' and with some faint hope of finding the place where he had been lying on the old sail, he began to move slowly and laboriously along, his mind dragged over, as it were, to the words of the boy as he taunted him about milk and bread and butter with ham. It was agonising in his literally starving condition to think of such things, and he tried to keep his mind upon finding the way out, meaning to work desperately after he had lain down for a bit to rest.

But it was impossible to control his thoughts, strive how he would. Hunger is an overmastering desire, and he

crept on step by step with outstretched hands, picturing in the darkness slices of ham, yellow butter, brown crusted loaves, and pure sweet milk, till, as he dragged his feet slowly along, half-fainting now with pain, weariness, and despair, his foot suddenly kicked against something which rolled over and over away from him.

'The lanthorn!' he exclaimed eagerly, and planning at once how he could strike a light with a stone and his knife, and perhaps contrive some tinder, he went down on his hands and knees, feeling about in all directions till he touched the object which he had kicked, and uttered a cry of joy and excitement.

It was not the lanthorn, but a round cross-handled basket with lid, and he trembled as he recalled Ram's words about what his mother had sent.

Was there truth in them, or were they the utterances of a malicious mind which wished to torture one who was in its power?

Archy Raystoke hardly dared to think, and knelt there for a few minutes, with his trembling hands resting upon the basket, which he was afraid to open lest it should not contain that which he looked for.

'Out of my misery at all events,' he cried; and he tore off the lid.

CHAPTER XXI.

'THEY only want to keep me a prisoner,' said the midshipman half an hour after, as he sat with his mouth full, steadily eating away as a boy of seventeen can eat—'a prisoner till they've got all their stuff safe away. They dare not hurt me. I'm not afraid of that, and it's a very strange thing if I can't prove myself as clever as that cunning young scoundrel who trapped me here. At all events, I'll try. They dare not starve me: not they. Wait a bit, and I'll show them that I'm not so stupid as they think. Shut me up here, would they? Well, we'll see!'

He went on munching a little longer, then felt for the bottle, took out the tight cork, had a good long draught of the milk it contained, recorked and put it away in the basket with the bread, butter, and ham he had not consumed, shut down the lid, and laughed.

There was nothing very cheerful about his prison to make him laugh, but the reaction was so great—he felt so different after his hearty meal—that he was ready to look any difficulty in the face, and full of wonder at his despondency of a short time before.

There's a good deal of magic in food to one who is fasting, and is blessed with health and a good appetite.

'Now then,' he said, rising with the basket in his hand, 'the first thing is to find a place to stow you;' and he had no difficulty in finding ledge after ledge that would have held the basket, but he wanted one that would be easily found in the darkness.

At last he felt his way to a great mass of rock, upon which, about level with his head, was a projection upon which the basket stood well enough, and trusting to being able to find it again by means of the great block, he turned his attention to the lanthorn.

'If I only had that,' he said to himself.

He stood thinking in the darkness, wondering which way he had better try.

'Any way,' he said at last, 'for I will have it; and then if I don't find my way out of this hole, I'm as stupid as that fellow thinks.'

Stretching out his hands to save himself from a blow against any obstacle, he stalked off in as straight a direction as he could go, feeling his way with his feet, and always making sure of firm foothold before he moved the one that was safe, for his one great dread in the vast cavern was lest he should suddenly find himself on the brink of some yawning shaft.

He knew little about the district, his ideas of the place being principally confined to what he had seen of the coast-line from the sea, but rugged piles of stone had been pointed out to him here and there as being the refuse of the stone that had been ages before dug and regularly mined by shafts and galleries out of the bowels of the earth; and a little thinking convinced him that he must be shut up in one of those old quarries which had been seized upon by the smugglers as a place to hide their stores.

It was a shrewd guess, and he could not help thinking afterwards that it was no wonder that so little success attended the efforts of the revenue cutter's crew to trace cargoes which had been landed when the smugglers had such lurking places as this.

As he crept slowly on, step by step, these and similar thoughts came rapidly through the prisoner's brain, and as he slowly mounted what seemed to be a pile of fragments, he began to wonder where his prison could be—whether it was close to the shore or some distance inland.

He stopped to listen, hoping to hear the breaking of the waves among the rocks, which would have proved what he wished to know at once; but though he listened again and again, he could not distinguish a sound. The only noises he heard were those he made in stepping on one side of some piece of stone, which gave forth a musical clink as it struck another.

He was climbing up now what appeared to be a steep slope, over great fragments of stone heavier than he would have been able to lift, and he seemed to creep up and up till he felt assured that the ceiling was just above him, and raising his hand he touched the roof, his fingers tracing out again the great cast of one of the old-world shell-fish—one of the great nautiluses of the geologist.

But fossils were unknown things in Archy Raystoke's day. He was hunting for a lanthorn, not for specimens.

As he stood on the highest part of this pile of stone, he hesitated about going farther, and bore off to his left, feeling that in all probability the object of his search had not come so far.

From time to time he paused to listen, and at last thought of trying to find the extent of the place by

shouting; but he was satisfied with his first essay, his voice going echoing away apparently for a great distance, and the peculiar, dying, whispering sound was not pleasant to one alone in the darkness.

After a while, however, as he felt that he was walking over small fragments of stone, he picked up a piece and threw it, to try if he were near the end of the cavern in this direction, for he was growing tired and longed now to find his way to the sailcloth to lie down and rest.

The piece he held was about a pound weight, and, drawing back his hand as far as he could reach, he threw it with all his might, to start back in alarm, for it struck wood with a heavy thud, and dropped down almost at his feet.

Unknown to himself he had gradually found his way to the pile of kegs, and these he touched the next moment, thinking that, as he stood facing them, the place where he had first come to himself must lie off to his left; and so it proved after a long search, and he sank down so wearied out, that as he chose by preference to lie down, he was before many minutes had elapsed in a deep and dreamless sleep, forgetful of the darkness and any peril that might be ready to assail him next.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHETHER it was night or day when Archy awoke he could not tell, but he felt rested and refreshed, and ready to try and do something to make his escape.

There was a way into his prison, and that way, he vowed, should by some means or other be his way out.

The first thing to do was to find that lanthorn, of whose position he seemed to have some vague idea; but, after a little search, he found that all idea of locality had gone, and he had not the slightest idea of the direction to go next.

'I must leave it to chance,' he said. 'I shall find it when I'm not trying;' and, wearying of the search, he set himself now to try and make his way to the place where his visitors had come into the old quarry.

Here, again, he was utterly at fault, for the cavern was so big and irregular, and he was still so haunted by the thought that he might be at any moment on the brink of some deep hole, half full of water, that he dared not search so energetically as he would have liked.

He had many narrow escapes from falls and blows against projecting masses of stone, and he found himself, after hours of wandering, so tired and faint, that he would

gladly have found the basket and the resting-place; but the more he searched the more convinced he grew of the ease with which he could lose himself entirely in the darkness, and when he did come upon any spot again which he recognised by touch as one that he had felt before, it seemed to him that he stumbled upon it quite by accident, and the moment he left it he was as helpless as before.

Wearied out at length, he determined to go in a straight line from where he was to the extremity of the vault; then to curve back, and from this point strike out to the left in search of his resting-place and the basket.

It took him just about an hour, and when he had done all this he could find no traces of his food, but he heard a noise close behind him which nailed him to the spot, and he stood motionless, listening.

According to his idea, he was at the end of the cave farthest from where his gaolers approached, but unless there were two entrances he was quite wrong, for he had wandered close up to the place whence Ram and Jemmy had come, and, the noise continuing, he stooped down—to let whoever it was pass him, while he made for the entrance and slipped out.

Directly after there was the soft glow of a lanthorn, which suddenly came into view round a corner, high up by the ceiling, and the bearer began to descend a rough slope.

Archy saw no more, for he dropped down and hid behind a stone, watching the glare of light, and then, as it passed him going on toward the other end of the cave, he crept from behind the stone and made for the rough slope, which was thoroughly printed on his mind, so that he could almost picture every rock and inequality that might be in his way.

The door would be open, he thought; and, if he could, he would have a clever revenge, for he determined to turn the tables on his enemies, shut them in, and he hoped to make them prisoners till he could signal for help from the cutter, and get a boat's crew ashore.

As he crept on quietly he glanced over his shoulder once, saw the light disappearing behind the great square, squat pillars, and then with a feeling of triumph that thrilled through him, he went cautiously up the rest of the slope, his arms outstretched, his breath held, and in momentary expectation of hearing an exclamation from the other end of the cave.

'They'll think I'm somewhere about,' he said to himself, as he crept on, expecting to pass through an opening into daylight the next moment; but it did not turn out as he anticipated, for he stopped short with his nose against some one's throat, his arms on each side of a sturdy body, and the arms belonging to that body gripped him tight.

'Steady, Ram, lad!' came in a gruff whisper. 'Light out?'

Archy's heart beat heavily, and he felt that, to escape, he ought to try and imitate the boy's voice, and say 'Yes.'

But he could not—only stand panting, and the next instant his opportunity, if opportunity it was, had gone. For Ram's real voice came from right at the other end, echoing along the roof.

'Look out, Jemmy. He aren't here.'

'No, he aren't there, lad,' said the smuggler with a laugh. 'Bring your lanthorn, I've ketched a rat or some'at. Come and see.'

Archy made a violent struggle to escape, but the man's arms were tight round his waist, he was lifted off the slope,

and as he fully realised that, in a wrestling match, no matter how active and strong seventeen may be, it is no match for big, well-set seven-and-thirty.

'No good, youngster,' growled the smuggler, as he carried the midshipman down the slope, and held him at the bottom. 'Very good idea, but you see we didn't mean you to get out like that.'

Feeling that he was exhausting himself for nothing, Archy ceased his struggling, and was held there motionless, as Ram came up with the lanthorn to begin grinning.

'Bring him along, Jemmy,' he said. 'His dinner's ready.'

'Shall I carry him, lad?'

'Look here,' cried Archy haughtily. 'You two are, I suppose, quite ignorant of the consequences of keeping me here?'

'What's he talking about, Jemmy?' said Ram.

'Dunno, lad: something 'bout consequences.'

'As soon as it is known that you have seized and kept me here, you will both be arrested, and have to suffer a long term of imprisonment, even if you get no worse off.'

'But suppose no one knows you are here?' said Ram.

'But it will be known, so I give you both fair warning.'

'Thank ye,' said Ram mockingly.

'And thank ye for me too, my lad.'

'So now, take my advice, open that door, and set me free. If you do this, I'll promise to intercede for you two, and I daresay I can save you from punishment.'

'Well, that's handsome; isn't it, Jemmy?' said Ram mockingly.

'Do you hear me?' cried Archy.

'Oh, I can, quite plain,' said Jemmy.

'So can I,' said Ram; 'but your dinner's ready, Mr. Orficer; so come and have it.'

'Enough of this,' cried Archy, wrenching himself free. 'Open that door, and let me go.'

'Better carry him, Jemmy.'

'If you dare!' cried the angry prisoner, beginning the struggle, but Jemmy Dadd's muscles were like steel, and he whipped the young midshipman off his feet, and carried him, kicking and struggling with all his might, right along the cave, Ram going first with the lanthorn; and in spite of its feeble, poor, dulled light, the prisoner was able to get a better idea of the shape and size of the place than he had had before.

The captive ceased struggling, and keenly watched the various pillars and heaps they passed, noting too how the cavern seemed to extend in a wide passage right on before them, and seemingly endless gloom.

'There you are,' said Jemmy, as he set his burden down; 'quite at home. Is he going to ask us to dinner, Ram, lad, and send for his skipper to jyne us?'

Archy paid no heed to the man's jeering words, for he was thinking of the place, and trying to fix it all in his memory, for use when these two had gone.

He knew that he must have been over the parts he had seen again and again in the darkness, but beyond the memory of the great pillars he had marked, the place had made no impression; but now he had seen the way out, and the way further in, and throwing himself down, he without apparent reason took up a long narrow piece of stone, handled it for a moment or two, and set it down carelessly, but not with so much indifference that he did not contrive that it should act as a rough pointer, ready to indicate the direction of the door.

Feeling that it was useless to say more to his gaolers, especially after his attempt to escape, he half lay on the

old sail; while, as if the darkness were the same to him as the light, the smuggler said laconically, 'Going back!' turned on his heel, and disappeared in the black gloom.

'Brought you some bacon and some fried eggs, this time,' said Ram, looking at him attentively, but Archy made no reply.

'No use to rile,' continued the boy, 'and you can't get out, so take it easy. Father 'll let you go some day.'

'Where is the cutter?' said Archy sharply.

'I d'know. Gone.'

'Gone?'

'Yes, she went off somewhere. To look for you, pr'aps,' said the boy grinning, 'or else they think you're drownded.'

'Look here,' said the midshipman suddenly, 'you behaved very treacherously to me, but I'll forgive you if you'll let me go.'

'Look here,' replied the boy, 'you behaved very treacherously to us, dressing up, and spying on us; but I've got you, and won't let you go.'

'I was doing my duty, sir.'

'And I'm doing my dooty—what father telled me.'

'How much will you take to let me go?'

'How much will you give?' said Ram, grinning, and the midshipman's heart made a bound.

'You shall have five pounds, if you'll let me go now, at once.'

'There's as much as you'll eat till I come agen,' said Ram abruptly; 'and if I don't forget you as I did my rabbits once, and they were starved to death, I'll bring you some more.—I say!'

Archy looked at him fiercely.

'Don't try to drink what's in them tubs. It's awful strong, and might kill you.'

'Stop a moment; leave me a light.'

'What do you want with a light? You kicked the last over, and thought you'd get out in the dark. You may have the one you kicked.'

'But it is so dark here,' said Archy, as the boy picked up the empty basket.

'Course it is when there's no light,' said the boy coolly; and swinging the lanthorn as he rose, he continued, 'You'll find the road to your mouth, I daresay. I did not bring you a knife, because you're such a savage one.'

'Where is my dirk?'

'What d'yer mean? Your little sword?'

'Yes.'

'Father's got it all right; said it was a dangerous thing for a boy!'

Ram gave his prisoner a nod, and went off whistling, the prisoner following at a distance, and getting pretty close up to the beginning of the slope as the lanthorn disappeared round a corner. Then, as he listened, it seemed to him that the boy climbed up somewhere, talking the while to his companion, their voices sounding hollow and rumbling, then there was a pause, the dull thud of a closing door, the drawing of bolts, and soon the rattling of heavy stones, and once more all was silent.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A STRANGE depressing sensation came over the young prisoner as he stood there once more alone, but he turned sharply round with his teeth set, thought for a few moments about his course back, and then, feeling more determined and firm, walked slowly on, and to his great delight found that it was possible to become educated to do without sight, for, each time that he thought he was near a pillar, he stretched out his hand to find that he touched it, and with very little difficulty he walked straight up to the old sail, felt about, and there was the basket of food, which he attacked at once, and soon after fell asleep.

Four more visits were paid him by Ram, but whether they were at intervals of days or half days, the prisoner could not tell, for any questions he asked were laughingly evaded, and all attempts at persuasion and bribery proved useless.

He did learn that the cutter had just returned and gone away again. And it seemed to him that he was forgotten, but he never thoroughly lost heart, and during this time he had accustomed himself to the darkness, and educated his feet wonderfully in the topography of the place.

Of one thing he had fully satisfied himself, and that was

the hopelessness of getting out by the way his visitors came in. They were too cautious ever to leave the door unguarded ; hence the prisoner felt that if he knocked down and stunned the frank, good-tempered boy who seemed disposed to be the best of friends in every way but that of helping him to escape, he would be no nearer freedom than before.

He had gone up the slope twice, and the last time crept near enough to see that Ram was climbing up a well-like shaft by means of rugged projections in the wall, that as he got about twenty feet up he handed the lanthorn to the man, climbed out through a square opening, and then a trap-door was shut down, locked, and bolted, and what sounded to be a number of heavy pieces of stone were drawn over.

As far as he could judge, after venturing up and nearly having a severe fall in the darkness, escape was impossible that way, so he returned after each trial to think, and come to the conclusion that if the place had been used for the purpose of digging out stone, of which there could be no doubt, there must be some other way by which the great pieces had been dragged up to daylight.

With a lanthorn or torch he might easily have satisfied himself upon this point. To achieve it without was a terribly risky task.

Still he determined to try, and after a hasty meal, directly his gaolers had paid their last visit, he started off in the opposite direction to that which led to the trap-door, and proceeding cautiously, taking the precaution to keep on throwing pieces of stone before him, to satisfy himself that there was no well or pit in his way, he went on and on.

Now he threw a piece of stone to his left hand, to his

right, and after going many yards at what was but a snail's pace, he discovered that the place had suddenly contracted, and after creeping a little farther, the place was more contracted still, and ascended. So narrowed was it now that a couple of steps in either direction enabled him to touch a wall, while about twenty short paces farther on the ascent grew much more straight, and there was no fear of a pit or shaft in the way, for he found that roughly square blocks of stone were laid like a flight of steps, up which he clambered, and then sunk down, overcome by the feeling of joy which had flooded his brain.



He must have come up quite fifty feet after ascending the slope along which he had walked, and here he was at the top of the flight of clumsy stairs on a kind of platform of rugged stones, and straight before him there was a chink so narrow that he could not have thrust a hand through it, but wide enough to allow the passage of a gleam of light; there was a familiar odour, too, of salt air and seaweed, and as he placed his ear to the chink he could hear, as if far below, the wash of water.

'Why, this must be at the side of the cliff,' he said joyously; and if he could enlarge that crack there would be a way out to the face of the rocks, where it would go

hard with him indeed if he could not climb up to the grassy fields above, or down to the shore below.

'Why didn't I try this before?' he cried. 'Oh, how foolish! Not get out, eh? I'll soon show them that;' and he began to feel about carefully all over the face of the stones before him, to satisfy himself before long that there had been a large roughly square opening here, which had been filled in with some pieces of stone, between which he could feel that there was mortar.

'Now, then, what I want is a good marlinspike or an iron bar. Oh, if I had my dirk here I could move them with that.'

But he had neither bar, marlinspike, nor dirk, nothing but his hands and a small pocket knife, so a depressing feeling of vexation humbled him for a time.

He soon cast that off though, for it was impossible to feel low spirited in the face of such a discovery, and before commencing the task he had in hand he knelt down with his face close to the chink to drink in the delicious sea air.

'I wonder how long I shall be a prisoner,' he said aloud; and he laughed, for he could see no difficulties now. Still they began to appear soon after, and the first one he mentally saw was the coming of Ram with his food. He must know the place thoroughly, as he had shown by the care with which he threaded his way among the loose stones and pillars, and if he came with his lanthorn and missed him, he might walk up there and find him at work.

'I'll be careful,' he said to himself; and taking out his knife forcing himself to believe that it was about twelve o'clock each day that the lad came, and if so, as it was about six hours, as near as he could guess, since the basket

was brought, he had about a couple of hours more daylight, then the long night and all the morning, before his gaoler would come again.

He bitterly regretted now not having tried to time Ram's visits, forgetting that it would have been impossible to do so without light, and, unable to restrain his impatience to the extent of waiting till he came again, and watching for night from then, he went to work to try and loosen a stone by the side of the crevice, and toiled away till at the end of what seemed to be two hours, the light through the crevice paled, grew dull, then dark, and for the first time for many days he knew that it was night.

Cheered by his calculation being so far right, he worked and scraped out the mortar, satisfied even with getting away the tiniest scraps, feeling as he did that if he could only dislodge one stone he could bring up from below plenty of great and splinter-shaped pieces with which he could hammer, and take out the rest, or enough for his body to pass through.

So light-hearted did he feel, as guiding the point of his knife by his fingers, he picked and scraped away, that he began to hum a tune over softly. It was as black now as it was in the deepest part of the ancient quarry, but that did not seem to matter, for it was only the darkness of evening, and if he waited there and kept on working, he would see, first of all, a long pallid ray that would grow brighter, and bring as it were some light and hope, while as soon as he could get out a stone he would be able to see the sea, perhaps even make out the cutter, and signal.

No: the boy had said that it was gone. But it would come back, and they would see his signals; a boat would come ashore, he would be fetched out of this miserable black hole; the smugglers would be captured, and he

would have such a revenge on that boy Ram. It would be glorious.

But all depended upon little *ifs*—*if* he could get out the stone, *if* the hole happened to be opposite the spot where the cutter was moored, *if* they could see his signals.

It was discouraging to have such thoughts as these, but Archy Raystoke had been for days condemned to inactivity, and the opportunity of working at something definite which proffered a way of escape made him toil on with all his his might.

In fact, he was obliged to check himself, for his task needed care. Too much exercise of the strength which had been growing latent might mean breaking his knife, and the destruction of his hopes.

So he toiled on well into the night, picking and loosening tiny scraps of mortar, which, hard though it was, had fortunately for him been made of an exceedingly coarse sand, or rather very fine shingle, whose tiny pebbles formed each a point to work upon till it was loosened and fell.

Archy's first thought was to work right on through the night, but the monotonous task in the darkness, and the fatigue and excitement, combined to produce their customary effect, and he found himself nodding and starting into wakefulness so many times over, that he resolved at last to go back to his starting-place, have a good meal, and then come back.

He left his task with reluctance, but nature would not be refused, and without much difficulty he found his way to the basket, ate heartily, sat still to think a few minutes, and thought too much, starting up suddenly and rubbing his eyes.

'How stupid of me!' he exclaimed. 'I must have just nodded off to sleep. Nearly wasted a lot of time.'

Afraid to remain where he was, lest he should yield to the temptation again and fall dead asleep, he eagerly made his way back to the slope and the rough steps, to stand there wondering as he got to the top.

For there, straight before him, was a pale ray of light, and the place smelt cool and fresh.

Surely a star or the moon must be up, he thought, as he knelt down and resumed his task, feeling somehow a good deal rested.

The explanation was not long in coming, for to his astonishment the ray of light grew brighter and brighter, and broadened out full of dancing motes when he had been an hour at work, teaching him that he had not dropped off to sleep for a minute or two, but long enough to give him a good night's rest sufficient to prepare him for the toil to come.

He felt vexed and called it laziness, working the harder to recover lost time, and as the hours glided by listening intently for the slightest sound from the quarry below that should indicate the coming of Ram with his daily portion of food.

On previous days he had looked forward to the lad's approach as something that would break the monotony of his captivity, but now he would have given anything to have known that by some accident the lad would be kept away.

Still Archy toiled on, the stone he had attacked as tight as ever, but quite a little heap of rough mortar increasing beneath where he knelt.

'It's only getting out the first one,' he argued; 'the others will come easily enough.'

And so, full of hope, he kept on, till feeling that it must be near the time for the visit, he reluctantly closed his

pocket-knife and went down, gazing back first at the tiny ray of light which pointed the way to liberty.

His arms ached and his fingers were sore. There was a blister too in the palm of his hand where the knife had pressed; but these were trifles now, and he seated himself in his old spot ready to receive his visitors, and so full of



hope that he could hardly refrain from shouting for joy.

He could see it all, now. This was quite an ancient mine, one perhaps from which all the best stone had been worked. Where Ram came down was the land entrance, and the ray of light marked the opening in the face of the cliff, from which the pieces of stone had been lowered down into boats or ships below. After the smugglers had

taken possession it seemed probable that they had filled up the hole in the cliff face, though it struck Archy that this would leave them a handy place to get their cargoes ashore if they had tackle to haul it up, and get it into their store at once.

The time seemed very long before the rattle and rumble of the stones on the trap-door struck upon Archy's listening ear, but at last, after he had convinced himself that he might have worked two or three hours longer, there it was, and then came the rattle of the bolts and the sharp sound of the lock. Directly afterwards there was a soft glare, the lanthorn appeared like some creature of light swaying and floating towards him in the darkness till it stopped close by, and Ram's now familiar voice exclaimed,—

'Hullo there! Getting hungry?'

'Yes,' said Archy, in a voice he wished to sound surly and obstinate, but which in spite of his wishes had a cheerful ring, which affected Ram, who began to laugh and chatter.

'Nice to be you,' he said. 'Get all the good things, you do. Fried fish to-day, and pork pie. I say, midshipman, you have got into good quarters, you have.'

Archy tried to seem sulky.

'Oh, you needn't talk without you like, but they didn't feed you up aboard ship like you're getting it now, I know; salt beef, then salt pork, and hard biscuits. Why, it's like fattening up one of our pigs for Christmas. I say, you are quiet. Haven't been at one of them little kegs, have you? Oh, very well; if you don't like to talk, I can't make you.'

'Are you going to let me out of this place?' said the midshipman, so as to keep up the idea of his longing to be set free, and chase any suspicions of his having discovered a way out.

When I get orders, Mr. Orsifer, and not before. I aren't skipper, no more nor you are.'

'Another piece of insolence,' thought the prisoner. 'Oh, how I will pay him out for this by and by!'

Aren't you going to peck?'

Archy took no notice, and at last there came, in a deep, echoing growl through the place,—

'Say, lad, going to be all day?'

'Coming, Jemmy,' Ram shouted. 'Want anything else, midshipman?'

'Yes, you to go and not worry me,' replied Archy, heartily repenting his words the next moment for fear that they should excite suspicion.

But they did not, for Ram only laughed and walked away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AS the prisoner sat listening to the bang of the trap-door and the rattling of the bolts, he could hardly contain himself. But knowing the danger of the boy coming back and finding him gone, he forced himself to stay where he was; and to pass away the time he opened the basket Ram had now left in place of the other, and forced himself to eat.

But he could hardly swallow the food, which seemed tasteless in the extreme, and he was about to give up and hasten back to his work when his heart leaped, for there was the distant sound of the bolts being drawn, and a minute or two later the soft yellow light came slowly towards him and stopped.

'Just remembered,' said its bearer. 'Got half way home first, though. Mother said I was to be sure and take back that basket. Put the stuff out on the sail. Hullo, what you been doing to your hands?'

Archy started guiltily, and looked at them in the light to see that they were covered with blood, from injuries that he had made unconsciously in toiling with his knife against the stones.

'Tumbled down?' continued Ram without waiting for an answer. 'Well, 'tis dark 'mong these stones. I used to

trip over them, but I could go anywhere now in the dark. Seem to feel like when they are near. Never mind, tear up yer hankychy and wrap round. I'll bring you one o' mine next time I come. There we are. Haven't for got the basket this time. I say!'

'Well?'

The lad was ten yards away now, holding the lanthorn above his head.

'You lost a chance.'

'What do you mean?'

'Jemmy Dadd isn't up by the door. You might have given me a topper with a stone, and run away; too late now.'

He ran off laughing, and holding the lanthorn down low to make sure of his way.

But Archy did not start up in pursuit. He saw a better way out now, and waiting till he felt convinced that the boy must be well on his way home, he jumped up, felt his way to the crevice, and was soon after hard at work picking the mortar from between the stones.

Now and then, as he grew faint and weary, it seemed to him that he had made no progress, but the little heap of mortar told different tales, and once more taking heart he toiled away.

It seemed a very easy thing to do, to loosen one stone in a rugged wall, draw it out, and then remove the other, but in practice it appeared almost impossible, and again going back into the quarry to partake of the food that was absolutely necessary, Archy returned to his task, and after working away again for about half an hour he fell fast asleep.

How long he slept he did not know, but he started awake again to find that it was quite dark, and he kept on like one in a dream

The stone seemed as fast as ever, and his progress was getting very slow now, for he had cleared away the mortar as fast as he could reach in; but at last, seizing the stone and getting his fingers well in the joint, he gave it a vigorous shove, and then uttered a shout of triumph, for to his delight there came a sharp crack, and after giving a vigorous shove, the stone, which was about twenty inches long, was drawn out, and became the instrument for dislodging its fellows.

This was comparatively easy now, and in the course of the next two days the prisoner had loosened and drawn out stones till he had made a way through a rough piece of wall six feet thick, and had enlarged the hole so that there was room to creep into the opening he had made and look out.

Here came disappointment the first. The wall he had worked through did not face out to sea, but was one side of a chasm, and he gazed at the opposite side.

Soon after he learned that this had not been the place where the stones were carried out for landing in boats, but the hole through which all the refuse was discharged, to fall in a crumbling heap a tremendous distance below, to be washed away by the waves which curved over and over against the foot and rolled up into the chasm.

Still he worked on, enlarging the hole and sending the broken pieces and mortar, rattling down the face of the cliff into the sea, till there was nothing to hinder his crawling out at any time, and either getting to the top of the cliff or down below to the shore.

He decided for the former as the more easy and the less likely to suggest peril, and he spent the next few hours after cleansing himself as much as possible, so as not to excite the attention of his young gaoler, and in his efforts to do this he made use of a piece of sailcloth, and an

end of a coil of rope which lay with some seagoing tackle hard by where he slept.

The day had come at last when the way was open, and he had but to creep out into the fresh bright sunshine and run for his liberty.

He could hardly refrain from doing so at once, but his long and arduous labour, which had taken the skin from his fingers and left his whole hands so tender that he hardly dared to touch anything, had taught him some wisdom, especially not to throw away the opportunity for which he had worked so hard.

And now he sat there in the darkness, waiting, so exultant that his seat might have been a throne, instead of a worn-out sail stretched over a mass of stone. He hugged the knees upon which his chin rested, and gazed straight before him into the blackness, watching for the first glow of Ram's lanthorn, and seeing as he watched the glorious sky, the blue sea all a-ripple; the shimmer and play of a passing shoal of fish; gulls floating without effort, now high up, now low down, their breasts of purest white, their backs of delicate grey, and their wondering eyes gazing at the rough-looking fisher-lad who crept out of a hole in the face of the cliff, made his way from shelf to shelf, ever up and up till he was on the grass at the top, where he lay down to wait till night for fear of being seen and dragged back.

The black darkness of the great cavern quarry was all alight now with the pictures his mind painted, and, in his delight and satisfaction, he laughed aloud as he thought of Ram's disappointment on coming one day and finding his prisoner flown.

It was hard work to keep from starting at once, but the midshipman felt that if he did, his escape would be

discovered at any moment, and if it were, it was only a question of time before he would have the whole smuggling gang after him, and he would be hunted down to a lot ten times more bitter from the fact of his having failure to contemplate, and form his mental food.

The rattle at last. The door dragged up, and Ram was not alone, for his voice could be heard in conversation with Jemmy Dadd.

The boy was in capital spirits, and he was whistling merrily, his shrill notes echoing from the flat roof as he came on swinging his lanthorn in one hand, the basket in the other.

''Sleep?' he said, as he saw Archy's attitude. 'There you are,' he continued. 'I know you weren't asleep, and if you don't like to talk it aren't my fault. Want anything else?'

No reply; Archy dare not speak.

'Oh, very well,' he said, 'you can do as you like. Where's t'other basket?'

A shiver ran through the prisoner as he recollected that which he had forgotten in his excitement: the basket which he had taken with some of the food therein, ready for his use as he worked, was standing by the opening at the top of the steps, and he cast an anxious glance sidewise in the direction of the passage, in dread lest the boy should detect the light shining down.

He need not have been alarmed, for there was not a ray visible, and even if there had been, the light cast by the opened lanthorn would have hidden it; but he sat there trembling all the same, and with a curious sensation of suffocation rising in his throat, as he softly altered his position and loosened his hands, ready to make a spring at his enemy if it should become necessary.

'Well, I do call that grumpy. Keeps on bringing you nuts, and you're so snarky that you won't so much as give one back the shells. Now, then, where's that basket?'

Archy felt that he must speak, or else the boy would go in search of it.

'I haven't done with it.'

'But I want it to take back.'

'It has some of the dinner in it.'

'Well, then, let's empty it out.'

'No,' said Archy, sitting up angrily; 'you can't have it now.'

'Oh,' said Ram, 'that's it, is it? Suppose I say I will have it?'

'If you don't take yourself off,' cried Archy, 'I'll break your head with one of these pieces of stone.'

'Two can play at that game.'

'Be off.'

'I shan't. I want our basket. Mother said I was to bring it back.'

'Tell her you haven't got it.'

'Now, look here,' cried Ram, 'if you don't give me that basket back, I won't bring you what I was going to bring to-morrow. Where is it?'

'Where I put it. You contemptible young smuggling thief! How dare you come worrying a gentleman about a dirty old basket!'

'Wasn't dirty, for mother scrubbed it out before she'd send it to you. Where is it?'

Desperate now in his fix, and feeling that his only resource to keep Ram from searching for the basket with his lanthorn was to keep up this show of anger, Archy made a snatch at a long splinter of stone, and started up menacingly.

'Oh, that's it, is it?' cried Ram, who stood upon his guard, but did not appear in the least bit alarmed. 'Fed you too well, have I? Had too many oats, and you're beginning to kick up your heels and squeak and snort. Never mind, I'll soon make you civil again. Going to give me that basket?'

'No.'

'Then you shan't have this. There!' cried Ram, and snatching up the one he had brought, he walked straight away, swinging his lanthorn after he had shut it with a snap.

'Going to give it to me?' he cried, as he stopped about half way to the trap-door.

'No.'

'You'll want all this, and I've got some good tack inside.'

'Be off, fellow, and don't bother me.'

'Yah! Who want's to?' cried Ram; and he went off whistling merrily till he was at the opening, when he shouted back,—

'No oats to-day, pony. Good-bye.'

Archy leaped up and stood listening with his heart beating fast, and his head bent in the direction taken by the boy.

'How unfortunate!' he said. 'But I could not help it. Will he come back?'

He listened and listened and hesitated, but there was no sound, and still he hesitated, till quite a couple of hours must have passed, when he uttered a loud exultant cry, determined now to make one bold dash for liberty, and made straight through the darkness for the open way.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE midshipman drew in a long breath of the salt air, as he stood at the opening in the cliff face. He tightened his belt, drew his red cap down on his head, wished that his hands were not so sore, and muttered the words, 'Now for liberty!' He began to creep through the hole till his head was well out, and he could look round for enemies.

There was not one. The only thing that he could see was a gull sailing round and round between him and the sea, down to his right.

And now, for the first time, it struck him that the gull looked very small, and from that by degrees he began to realise that the hole out of which he had thrust his head was fully four hundred feet above where the waves broke, and that it must be two hundred more to the top of the cliff.

It looked more perilous too than it had seemed before, but the lad was in nowise daunted. The way was open to him to climb up or lower himself down apparently, but he chose the former way of escape, knowing as he did how very little at the base of the cliffs was left bare even in the lowest tides, and that if he got down he would either have to swim or to sit perched upon a shelf of rock till some boat came and picked him off.

There was no cutter in view, but he did not trouble about that. He stopped only to gaze down at the dazzling blue sea, and thought that if it came to the worst he could leap right off into deep water, and then he drew himself right out on to a rugged ledge, a few inches in width, and stood holding on by the stones round the opening, looking upward for the best way to get up.

'Don't seem easy,' he said cheerily, 'but every foot climbed will be one less to get up. So, here goes.'

As he ceased speaking he drew a deep breath, and then feeling that safety depended upon his being firm, cool, and deliberate, he made his way from the mouth of the hole along the ledge upon which he stood, till he found a spot where he could ascend higher.

It was necessary that he should find such a spot, for the ledge had grown narrower and in another yard died completely away. So, raising his hands to their full extent, he found a place for one foot, then for the other, repeated the experiment, and was just going to draw himself up to a ledge similar to that which he had just left, when one foot slipped from the stone upon which it rested, and had the lad lost his nerve he must have fallen headlong.

But he held on tightly, waited a minute to let the jarring sensation pass away, depending upon his hands and one foot. Then calmly searching about he found firm foothold, raised himself, and the next moment he was on the green ledge.

'Wouldn't have done to tumble,' he said with a half laugh. 'Fall's one thing, a dive another. I suppose the water's pretty deep down there.'

The ledge he was now on was fully a foot wide, and the refuse and fish bones with which it was strewn told plainly enough that in the spring time it was the resting—perhaps

nesting—place of the sea-birds which swarmed along the coast.

As he stood facing the rock he found directly that he could not get any farther to his right, and a little search

proved that from this ledge he could get no higher, not even had he been provided with a ladder. Even if a rope had been lowered down to him from the top of the cliff, it would have been of no avail, for he realised now that which he could not see from the hole by which he had escaped, to wit, that the cliff projected above the opening, and a lowered down rope would have hung several feet right away clear.

'Get farther along,' he said coolly; and he edged himself slowly along, taking hold of every prominence he found to steady himself, and passing cautiously along the rough ledge over the hole, and then onward for forty or fifty feet, where a rift ran upward, and, by cautious climbing, he mounted slowly till he was on a fresh ledge, a few feet above which was another rift, and he climbed again, to come to a depression or niche, where he stopped to rest.

'No occasion to hurry,' he said to himself, and as there was plenty of room he sat down and gazed out to sea, noting a sail far away to the right, but the vessel was a schooner—it was not that which he sought.

He was apparently cool enough, but his pulses beat more rapidly than was consistent with the exertion through which he had gone, and being after a few minutes eager now to get his task at an end, he tried to the left, to find no way up there, to the right, but everywhere the rock was perpendicular, and offered no foothold; or else sloped outward, and concealed what was above.

He tried again and again, hoping against hope, but without result.

'Must be a way up,' he said, evidently considering that there must be because he wanted it, and he took tightly hold of a rough corner and leaned out a little to gaze upward, to find, in whichever direction he looked, right

or left, there was nothing but rugged limestone, which had been splintered and moulded by time till there was not a spot where the most venturesome climber could obtain foothold; in fact, above him he could not see a spot where even the sea-birds had been in the habit of finding a resting-place.

It was for liberty, and naturally enough the midshipman made no superficial search. His next plan was to lie flat down in the niche he had made his temporary resting-place, lean over, and try and map out a course by which he could descend a little way and then pass along for a distance, and resume his climb upward with better chances of success.

But no; he could see no sign to help him, and, as a keen sense of disappointment assailed him that he should have got so near liberty and have to give up, he decided that the way to freedom was downward.

And now, as he looked over the edge of the shelf on which he lay, it struck him for the first time that it was a very terrible descent, and, turning his eyes away, he looked up again for a way there.

All in vain. He was fully a hundred and twenty feet from the top of the huge cliff, and, half afraid now that he should be quite afraid, he determined to lose no time, and, going to the spot where he had crept on to the niche floor, he began to lower himself slowly down.

'Be a good thing,' he said to himself, as he searched with his feet and made sure of his footing, 'if one could leave all one's thoughts behind at a time like this, or only keep enough to think where to put one's feet.'

'Glad I haven't got on my uniform,' he said a few moments later, as his breast scraped over the rough rock.

Soon after,—

'Oh, how sore my hands are! That's better.'

He was back in safety on the ledge over the hole, and, passing along, he had soon descended to the one beneath the exit.

'Now then,' he said, as he paused for a few minutes before commencing his descent; 'this will be easier.'

Somehow he did not feel in any hurry to begin, and he sat down with his legs hanging over the ledge, to give his nerves time to calm down, for there was a strong tendency to throb about his pulses, and he was not sufficiently conversant with the house he lived in, to know that confinement, worry, want of fresh air, and excessive work during the past few days had not given him what the doctors call 'tone.'

So he sat there with his back to the rock, gazing out to sea again, and then watching the graceful curves made by a gull, which had risen higher and higher, and came nearer and nearer, till it was on a level with him, and watching him curiously.

'Wonder whether you think I am going to fall and let you have a pick at me,' said Archy, with a forced laugh; 'because I am not going to tumble, so you can be off.'

All the same, though, he shuddered, and he had to exercise a little force to make his new start downward.

'Best way after all,' he said, as he began to descend. 'If you go up, it gets more dangerous every minute, because you have farther to fall. If you go down, it gets safer, because you have less.'

He found the way now comparatively easy, for the rock sloped a little out, and he had even got down some sixty feet when he had a check.

'I don't know, though,' he said, as he put a bleeding knuckle to his lips. 'Don't make much difference, I

should think, whether you fall one hundred feet or five. Bother! I wish I did not keep on thinking about tumbling.'

He forced himself to study the next part of his descent, which was nearly perpendicular, but well broken up with ledges and cracks which offered good holding, and terminated a hundred feet below, upon a shelf, which naturally offered itself as his next resting-place, but beyond which it was impossible to see.

'Don't matter,' he said more cheerfully. 'Let's take difficulties a bit at a time. I'm free, and I can laugh at them now. I could jump into deep water and swim, if there were no way down from below there.'

His spirits rose now, for, though a false step or slip of the foot would have sent him headlong down to the broad ledge, from which he would in all probability have bounded into the sea, the climbing was good, and, panting with the exertion, he got from projection to ledge, now straight down, now diagonally, and often along first one tiny ledge or cornice and then another, zig-zagging, till, at about twenty feet from the place he was making for, a slaty piece of the limestone rock by which he was holding parted, frost-loosened, from the parent rock, and he went down with a rush.

But it was only a slide. He alighted on his feet, and, scratched and startled a bit, stood panting and trying to recover his composure.

'No harm done,' he said, as he looked up to where the hole from which he had escaped was beginning to look quite small. 'Might have been worse. Quite bad enough, though. Shakes one so. Now for a rest, and then down again.'

He stepped to the edge and looked over in the middle,

next to the left, then to the right, and always with the same result. He was now on a regular sea-birds' sanctuary, for the rock below him was not perpendicular; but sloped right under, and, try as he would, he could devise no plan for getting down lower, save by taking a header into the sea, where the water looked black and deep to his right, while to his left there was the chasm upon which, twenty feet or so out of the perpendicular line, was the hole from which he had come.

Heights of sea-cliffs are very deceptive, and slopes which look to the inexperienced eye only a hundred feet or so to the top, are often more than double. It was so here, for, in spite of the distance he had come down, the midshipman found that he must be fully two hundred feet above the sea.

'Oh, how vexatious!' he cried, as he ground his teeth. 'After all that work, after being so sure, to be out here on this wretched shelf like an old cormorant, but without any wings.'

'I don't care,' he said aloud, after again and again convincing himself that there was no possible means of farther descent. 'I won't go back to prison; I'll sit here and starve first. Not I,' he added, after a few moments' thought; 'the cutter will be sure to sail by, and they could see me if I made signals from just here.'

Rather doubtful, as he knew, for he was only at the corner of the chasm or tiny gulf into which the sea rushed, and the chances were that unless he had something big and white to wave, he was not likely to get his signal seen.

For one moment only the recollection of the food he had left behind tempted him to return.

'I might get it, and bring the basket down,' he said. 'No, I won't try it again; it's too dangerous. I don't

want another slip. Besides, there must be a way down farther, if I could find it. Of course! I knew it!' he cried, as he gazed over once more, farther in toward the head of the little chasm, which looked as though the rock had been split from top to bottom.

He rubbed his hands, for some thirty feet below there was certainly a narrow possible place, and from there perhaps another might be found.

'If one could get down,' he said to himself; but it did not look possible; the rock was out even of the perpendicular, and no sane person would attempt to drop from the edge so great a distance as that.

At that moment a piece of slaty rock came sliding down from on high, to fall with a crash and splinter on the rock at his feet.

'Must have loosened that,' he said; 'good job I didn't get it on my head. Oh!'

It was a cry of rage as much as of alarm, for there, following his track exactly, was Ram, who had returned repentant, alone, with his basket, to miss his prisoner, search, find the opening, and without hesitation to come down the cliff in pursuit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FOR the moment Archy Raystoke was puzzled—completely taken aback. This was something upon which he had not counted; and he stood there looking up, as he saw the boy descending with a far greater show of activity than he could have displayed.

Naturally, the first thought was of further flight, but he had already convinced himself that he was again a prisoner, and as, after another glance down at the ledge below to his left, he looked up at Ram, he set his teeth, and laughed in a way that did not promise well for his pursuer.

'*What is he coming down for?*' he said to himself, as his teeth began to set fast and his hands involuntarily to clench. 'Does he think he is going to drag me up there again? He had better not try.'

Meanwhile Ram was descending rapidly, and sending little ambassadors down before him in the shape of pieces of rock and shale, all of which arrived at the ledge in a very inimical way, bounding off, scattering in fragments, or falling with a heavy thud.

From time to time Ram looked down at his escaped prisoner, and then devoted himself to the places where he

should never plant his feet, achieving the whole in the most fearless manner, and finishing with a leap which landed him near where Archy stood gazing at him, regularly at bay.

Ram did not hesitate an instant, but dashed at the midshipman to seize him by the jacket, but Archy was on his mettle, and he struck out sharply, a blow in the chest and another in the right shoulder, sending the young smuggler staggering back.

'Oh, that's it, is it?' cried Ram furiously. 'I give you one more chance, though—will you give in, and come back quietly?'

'If you attempt to come near me, you dog,' said Archy slowly through his clenched teeth, 'I'll knock you off here into the sea.'

'Will you?' cried Ram, dashing at his late prisoner again, dodging the blow struck at him, closing with his adversary; and then began a struggle which would have made the blood of an onlooker curdle, so terribly narrow and dangerous was the place where the encounter took place.

Of the pair, Archy Raystoke was a little the bigger, but the smuggler's son fully made up for any deficiency by his activity, and the hardening his muscles had undergone for years.

No blows were struck, the efforts of Ram being apparently directed to throwing the midshipman down, when he meant to sit upon him till he had reduced him to obedience.

Archy's tactics were, of course, to prevent this, and rid himself of his adversary, as he felt all the time how horribly risky it was to struggle and wrestle there, for the ledge was six feet wide at the outside, and not much more than twice the length.

But in a few minutes, as the encounter grew more hot, and they held on to each other, and swayed here and there, all thought of the position they occupied was forgotten. One minute Ram, by entwining his leg within those of his adversary, nearly threw him; then, by a dexterous effort, Archy shook himself fairly free. Then they clasped again, swayed here and there, Archy getting far the worse of the en-



counter from weakness, but, with a final call upon himself, he strove desperately to recover lost ground, and made so fierce an effort to throw Ram in turn, that he succeeded.

His effort was not sufficiently well sustained, though, for success to have attended it, but for one fact. They had struggled to the extreme edge of the inward part of the shelf, and as the midshipman was at the end of his strength, and Ram realised it, the boy smiled, thrust back his right leg to give impetus to his next thrust, and his foot went down over the rock.

There was a cry, a jerk, and the midshipman was down on his chest, as he had fallen, clinging to the edge, for the young smuggler seemed to have been snatched from his arms, and was now lying thirty feet below on the edge of a sloping rock, part of his body without support, and apparently about to glide off into the waves below.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ARCHY shuddered, his eyes grew fixed, and his whole body seemed to be frozen. The minute before he had been burning with rage, and struggling to gain the mastery over his enemy; now he would have given anything to have undone the past.

'Ram!' he cried excitedly,—'Ram, my lad, turn over quickly, and lay hold, or you will be off.'

There was no reply. Ram's face looked ghastly, and his eyes were closed.

'I've killed him! I know I have!' cried Archy excitedly; and he strained himself more over the edge of the rock, to gaze wildly about for a means of descent, but there was only one: if he wished to get down to where the boy lay, apparently about to slip off into the sea, there was only one way, and that was to jump. Thirty feet! and if he did jump, he could not do so without coming down in contact with the boy, perhaps right on him, when it seemed as if a touch of a finger would send him headlong into the sea.

'What shall I do?' thought the midshipman. 'It is horrible. Ram!' he shouted. 'Rouse up! For goodness' sake, speak! Try to creep farther on to the rock. Oh, help! help!'

He shouted this frantically, but a wild and mournful cry from a gull was the only response, and his voice seemed to be utterly lost in the vast space around.

'I shall have murdered the poor fellow,' groaned Archy; and he stared about wildly again, in search of some means of getting to his adversary.

None—none whatever. It would have been madness to jump, and he knew it—death—certain death to both. No one could have leaped down that distance on to a shelf of rock without serious injury, and then it would have been impossible to save himself from the rebound which must have sent him headlong into the sea below. This even if the shelf had not already been occupied; and Ram lay there, evidently stunned, if not killed.

What did Mr. Brough and old Gurr always say? '*Be cool in danger—never lose your nerve!*'

'Yes, that was it!' he said, as he recalled lessons that he had received again and again. But what could he do? Even as he gazed down, he momentarily expected to see Ram glide slowly off, and, with brow covered with great drops of perspiration and his hands wet and cold, the midshipman rose panting to his feet, looked round, and sent up shout after shout for help.

Again his voice seemed utterly lost in the air, and a peculiar, querulous cry from the gull, which came slowly sailing round, was all the response he got.

'Ram!' he cried at last. 'Ram! Don't play tricks, lad. Speak to me. I want to help you. Tell me what to do—to get help. Can't you speak?'

There was no mistaking the state of affairs; the boy was either dead or completely stunned by his fall.

Archy put his hands to his temples, and stood looking down wildly for a few moments, to assure himself that he

could not reach his late adversary; and then, perfectly satisfied of the impossibility of the task, he began resolutely to climb up the face of the cliff where he had come down, and, setting his teeth hard, went from crack to crevice and ledge, on and on, seeing nothing but the white face below him on the shelf, and praying the while that the poor lad might not fall before he came back with help.

The work was more dangerous than he had anticipated, and twice he slipped, once so badly that he was holding on merely by the sharp edge of a projecting piece of stone, but he found foothold again, drew himself up, and went on climbing again, till, with face streaming with perspiration and his fingers wet with blood, of which he left traces on the stone as he went on, he at last reached the opening he had fought so hard to make, climbed in, turned and leaned out as far as he could, to try and get a glimpse of Ram, and be sure that he had not glided into the sea.

He could see nothing; Ram was far below under the projecting rock; and, drawing back once more, the midshipman began to hurry down the steps and then the slope, into the black quarry that he had fancied he had quitted for ever.

To his great delight, there, right away before him, was Ram's lanthorn, burning brightly with the door open, and shining upon the old sails and shipping gear, stores, and remains of wrecks saved from the sea.

But he did not stay. He caught up the lanthorn, closed the door lest a puff again should extinguish the candle, and then hesitated a moment or two as a thought struck him.

'No,' he said aloud, 'I must get help;' and, hurrying toward the opening, he kicked against the basket of provisions the lad had brought back. He made his way to the top of the other slope and shouted,—

Hi, Jemmy!—smuggler! Quick! Come down!'

There was no response, for, good-heartedly enough, Ram had, as beforesaid, repented, and come back alone.

What should he do? Climb out, and run for help?

No, he did not know where to find it; and by the time he had discovered some of Ram's people, it would be too late; so, with the way of escape open to him, and freedom ready to welcome him once again, he hurried back, lanthorn in hand, selected a coil of rope from the pile of stores, threw it over his shoulder, passing his left arm through, and, leaving the lanthorn where he had found it, he hurried back to the narrow passage, climbed the slope and the steps up to the opening; and, with the rope hanging like a sword-belt from his shoulder, impeding his movements, and getting caught in the projections over and over again, he once more began to descend.

How he got down he hardly knew, but long before he reached the great shelf, he was so incommoded by the rope that he contrived, spread-eagled as he was against the rock face, to get it over his head, and then carefully let it drop, uttering a cry of anguish as he saw it fall, catching against a piece of rock which diverted its course, so that it rested nearly half over the edge, and he clung there, gazing down wildly, expecting to see it disappear, in which case he would have had to climb again for another coil.

Fortunately it lodged, and in a few minutes he was down beside it, and close at the end of the great ledge, gazing over wonderingly, and with his eyes half blinded by a mist, expecting to see the narrow shelf below bare.

But no; Ram had not moved, and there was yet time.

Seizing the coil of rope, he shook it open, and selecting

one of the biggest blocks of stone, which had at some time fallen from above, he made one end of the rope fast, tried it to make sure, lowered the other over the edge, and carefully slid down, swinging to and fro, and turning slowly round, to hang for a few moments, trying to plant his foot on the ledge without touching Ram, for he felt more than ever convinced he would glide off at the slightest shock.

It was impossible. The only way was to draw up his legs, give himself an impetus by kicking against the rock, swinging to and fro, and then letting himself, at a certain moment when he was well beyond the boy, drop on to the shelf.

He tried the experiment, and swung past Ram again and again, but dared not leave go for fear of missing the rock with his feet.

At last he ventured: swung well past the prostrate figure, loosened his grasp, alighted on the narrow ledge quite clear, but could not preserve his balance, and fell back, uttering a low cry, as he tightened his grasp upon the rope again, but not till he had slipped rapidly down a good twenty feet, where he began swinging to and fro again.

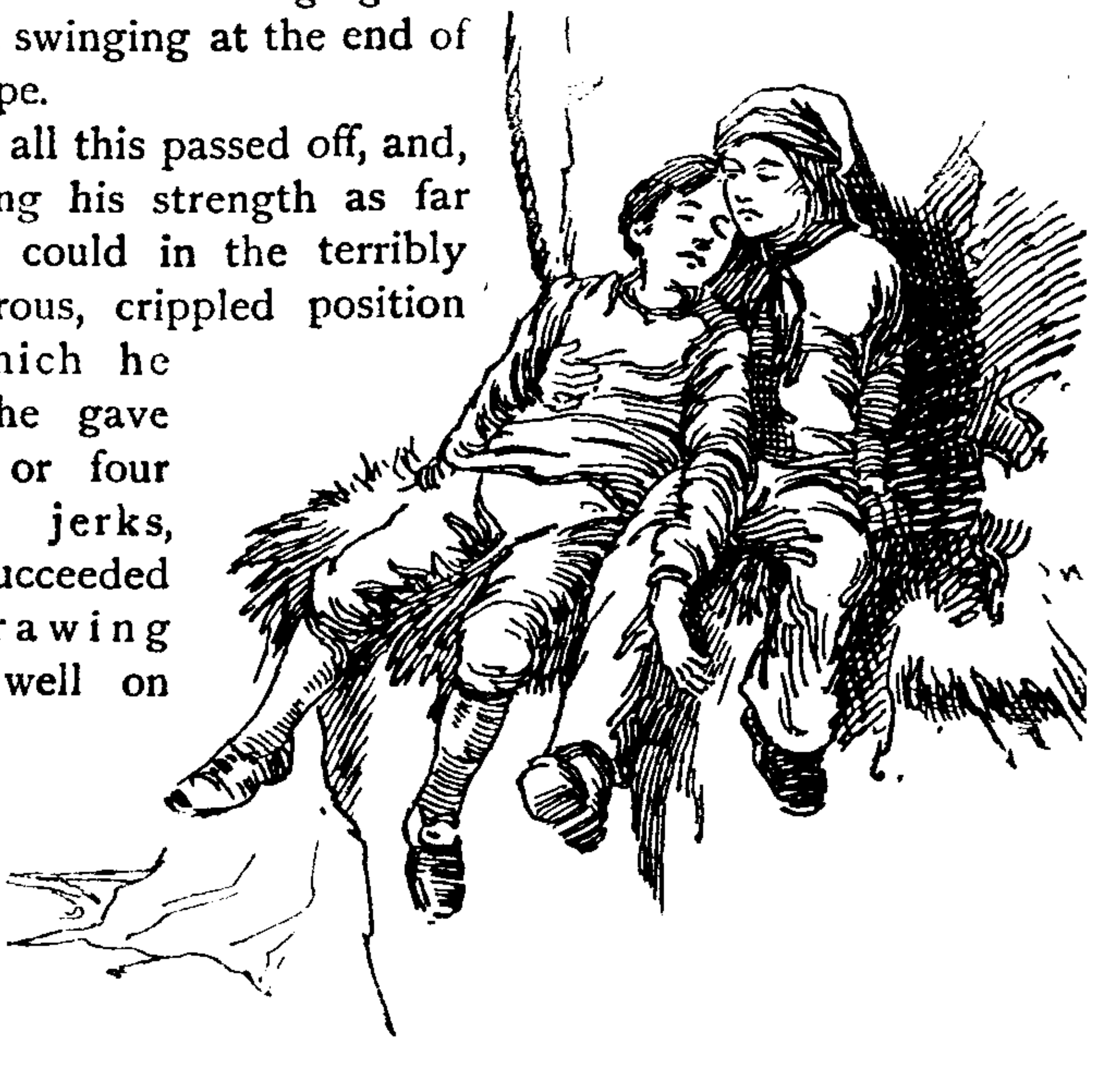
For a few moments it seemed all over; there was the sea at a terrible depth below him, and all that distance to climb up with his hands bleeding and giving him intense pain, while his arms felt half jerked out of their sockets.

But he had had plenty of experience in climbing ropes, and, muttering, 'Don't lose your nerve,' he got the line well twisted round his legs, and climbed up again sufficiently high to repeat his former experiment, this time with success, and he stood upon the ledge and loosely knotted the rope about his waist, to guard against letting

the end go, before kneeling down tremulously, and getting one hand well in under the collar of the boy's rough coat.

For some minutes he felt giddy; there was a mist before his eyes, and he involuntarily pressed himself close to the rock, expecting to fall, and in a curious, dreamy way he saw himself hanging far below. swinging at the end of the rope.

But all this passed off, and, exerting his strength as far as he could in the terribly dangerous, crippled position in which he was, he gave three or four sharp jerks, and succeeded in drawing Ram well on



to the shelf, when, in the revulsion of feeling, the dizziness came back, and he felt that he must faint.

'Leave off, will yer?' came roughly to his ears, and roused him, telling him that the boy was not dead. 'D'yer hear, Jemmy Dadd? Great coward! Father know'd you'd hit me like that, he'd half kill you.'

There was a pause, and a sob of relief struggled from Archy's breast.

Then Ram began to mutter again.

'Oh, my head!' he groaned. 'Oh, my head! Oh, my'—

He opened his eyes, and began to stare wildly; then he seemed to recollect himself, and started up to gaze up, then over the side at the sea far below, and lastly at his companion in misfortune.

'I reck'lect now,' he said. 'We was fighting, and I put my foot over the side, and come down here, hitting my head on the stones, and then I turned sick, and I knew I was falling over, and then I went to sleep. I was half off, wasn't I, with my legs down?'

'Yes. In a horrible position.'

'Yes, it wasn't nice. Oh, my head! But who— Why, you didn't go and get the rope and come down and pull me on?'

Archy nodded.

'Is Jemmy here?'

'No.'

'But did you climb up and get a rope, and come down again and haul me on here?'

'Yes,' said the midshipman.

Ram stared at him, holding his hand to the back of his head the while, and a couple of minutes must have elapsed before he said,—

'Well, you are a rum chap!'

Archy grew red. Curious gratitude this seemed for saving the lad's life.

'Didn't you know the door was open?'

'Yes.'

'Why didn't yer run away?'

'How could I, and leave you to fall off that place?'

'Dunno. Wouldn't ha' been nice. Where did you get the rope?'

'From close to where I slept.'

'Yes, there was a lot there. 'Tain't cut,' he said, looking at the hand he drew from the back of his head. 'What a whop it did come down on the rock!'

'Don't talk about it,' said Archy, with a shiver.

'Why not? Father allus said I'd got the thickest head he ever see. I say, though, you—did you—course you did. You climbed up again, and went into the cave, got the rope come down again, and then got down here to help me?'

'Yes.'

'When you might have run away?'

'Of course.'

'Thank ye. Shake hands!'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RAM sat there holding out his hand to the midshipman, but it was not taken, and for a space they gazed into each other's eyes.

The silence was broken by Ram.

'Well,' he said at last, 'won't you shake hands?'

'An officer and a gentleman cannot shake hands with one like you,' replied Archy coldly.

'Oh, can't he?' said Ram quietly. 'You're a gentleman. Was it being a gentleman made you come down and pull me on here.'

'I don't know whether being a gentleman made me do it,' said Archy coldly. 'I saw you would lose your life if I did not get a rope and come to you, and so I did it.'

'Yes; that's being a gentleman made you do that,' said Ram thoughtfully. 'None of our fellows would have done that.'

'I suppose not.'

'I know I wouldn't.'

'Yes, you would.'

Ram looked the midshipman hard in the face again.

'You mean, if I'd seen you lying down here like I was, I should have gone and fetched the rope and pulled you up?'

'Yes; I am sure you would.'

Ram sat in his old position, with his hand to the back of his aching head.

'But it's being a gentleman made you do it.'

'No; anybody who saw a person in danger would try and save his life; and you would have tried to save mine.'

'But I might have slipped and gone over the cliff.'

'You wouldn't have thought about that,' said Archy quietly. 'You did not think about the danger when you saw me trying to escape.'

'No, I didn't, did I?' said Ram thoughtfully. 'I knew how savage father would be if you got away and fetched the sailors; and he told me I was to see you didn't get out, so I come down after you.'

'And you would have done as I said.'

'Well, p'r'aps I should,' said Ram, laughing; 'but, as we didn't neither of us go over, it's no use to talk about it. My! how it does ache!'

He turned himself a little, so as to plant his back against the rock, and let his legs hang down over the edge.

'That's more comf'table. Bit of a rest. Hard work getting down here and wrastling.'

Archy was in so cramped and awkward a position, half kneeling, that he followed his companion's example, shuddering slightly, though, as he let his legs go down, and put his hands beside him to press his back firmly against the rock.

'Frightened?' said Ram, who was watching him.

'I don't know about being frightened. It would be a terrible fall.'

'Oh, I don't know,' said Ram, leaning forward and gazing down into the void. 'Water's precious deep here. Such lots of great conger eels, six foot long, 'bout the holes

in the bottom. Jemmy Dadd and me's caught 'em before now. Most strong enough to pull you out of the boat. Dessay, if you went down, you'd come up again, but you couldn't get ashore.'

'Why? A good swimmer could get round the point there, and make for the ledge where I saw you and that man land.'

'No, you couldn't,' said Ram; 'it's hard work to get round there with a boat. You do have to pull. That's where the race is, and it would carry you out to—oh!'

The boy was looking down between his legs as he spoke; and the midshipman just had time to dart forward his hand, catch him by the shoulder, and drag him back, or he would have gone off the rock.

Ram lurched over sidewise, his sun-browned face mottled and strange-looking, as his head dropped slowly over on to the midshipman's shoulder, where it lay for a good ten minutes, Archy passing his arm round the boy, and supporting him as he lay there, breathing heavily, with his eyes half closed.

It was a terrible position; and a cold, damp perspiration bedewed the midshipman's face, as he felt how near they both were to a terrible end. The deep water after that awful fall, the fierce current which would carry him out to sea—and then came shuddering thoughts of the great, long, serpent-like congers, of whose doings horrible stories were current among the sailors.

At last, to his great relief, Ram uttered a deep sigh, and sat up, smiling at his companion.

'I've felt like that before,' he said. 'Come over all at once sick and giddy, like you do if you lean down too much in the sun. I should have gone over, shouldn't I if you hadn't ketched me?'

'Don't talk about it.'

'Oh, very well; it was hitting my head such a crack, I suppose. I say, though, you never thought you could get away down here, did you?'

'Meant to try,' said Archy laconically.

'Yah! what was the good, I knowed you wouldn't; but I meant to fetch you back. Me and Jemmy Dadd come down here once after birds' eggs, before father had the place up there quite blocked up. It used to be a hole just big enough to creep through. Jemmy stopped up on that patch where you and me wrastled, and let me down with a rope. There's no getting no farther than this.'

'Not with a rope?'

'Well, with a very long one you might slide down to the water, but what's the good, without there was a boat waiting? You hadn't got the boat, and you didn't bring no rope. No use to try to get away.'

The words seemed more and more the words of truth as the midshipman listened, and he was compelled to own in his own mind that he had failed in his attempt; but a question seemed to leap from his lips next moment, and he said sharply,—

'Perhaps there's no getting down, but any one might climb up right to the top of the cliff.'

'Fly might, or a beedle,' said the boy, laughing. 'Why, a rabbit couldn't, and I've seen them do some rum things, cutting up the rocks where they've been straight up like a wall. Why, it comes right over up nigh the top. No, father's right; place is safe enough from the seaside, and so it is from the land. Now, then, let's go back.'

'You can go,' said Archy coldly. 'I'm going to stop here.'

'That you won't,' said Ram sharply. 'You're a-coming

up with me. Yah! what's the good o' being obstinate! We don't want to have another fight. Don't you see you can't get away?'

'I will get away,' said Archy sternly.

'Well, you won't get off this way, till your wings grow,' said Ram, laughing. 'Come on, mate, let's get back.'

Archy hesitated, but was obliged to come to the conclusion that he was beaten this time, and he turned slowly to his companion and said,—

'Can you climb that rope?'

'Can I climb that rope? I should think I can!'

'But dare you venture now?'

Ram put his hand to his head, and gazed up thoughtfully.

'Well, it would be stoopid if I was to turn dizzy again. S'pose you untie the rope from round you, and let me tie it round my waist. Then you go up first, and when I come, you'll be ready to lend me a hand.'

'Yes, that will be best,' said Archy.

'Without you want to leave me?' said the boy, laughing.

The midshipman made no reply. There was an arduous task before him, and his nerves were unstrung. After he had unfastened the end of the rope and passed it to Ram, who did not secure the end about him, but the middle, after he had nearly drawn it tight, so that, if he did slip, the fall would not be so long. Then reluctantly, but feeling that it must be done, Archy climbed the thirty feet of rope between him and the great ledge, slowly and surely, glad to lie down and close his eyes as soon as he was in safety so far.

He tried to, but he dared not look over when the rope began to quiver again. He contented himself with taking hold near the edge, and crouched there, picturing the boy

turning dizzy once more from his injury, letting go, and dropping with a terrible jerk to the extent of the rope where it was tied. Then, as he felt the strong hemp quiver in his hands, he found himself wondering if the strands would snap one by one with the terrible strain of the jerk, and whether the boy would drop down into the sea.

What should he do then?

What should he do if the rope did not part? He did not think he would have strength to draw the boy up, and, if he did, he was so unnerved now, that he did not believe he would be able to drag him over the edge on to the rock platform.

There! Ram must be turning giddy, he was so long; and, unable to bear the pressure longer, Archy opened his eyes and crept nearer to the edge, to face the horror of seeing the boy's wild upturned eyes.

But he saw nothing of the kind, save in the workings of his own disordered imagination. What he did see was Ram's frank-looking rustic face close up, and a hand was reached over the edge.

'You may get hold of me anywhere if you like,' said the boy, 'and give a hand. That's your style, orficer! pull away, and up she comes. That's it!' he said, as he crept over the edge. 'Thank'ee. I aren't smuggled.'

They both sat down for a few minutes, while Ram untied the rope from his waist and from round the big block of stone, before beginning to coil it up.

'I say,' he said, as he formed ring after ring of rope, 'that rock isn't very safe. If I'd slipped, and the rope hadn't snapped, that big stone would have come down atop of me, and what a mess you'd have been in, if father had said you pitched me off!'

'Let's get back,' said the midshipman, who felt sick at

heart; and he moved toward the place where he had been down and up three times.

'Wait a moment,' said Ram, securing the end of the rope, and throwing the coil over his shoulder. 'That's right. I'll go first. Know the way?'

'Because you don't trust me,' said Archy angrily.

'That's it,' said Ram. 'Door's open, and you might get out.'

Archy's teeth grated together, but he said nothing, only began to climb, following the boy patiently till they were nearing the opening, when he started so violently that he nearly lost his hold.

For a voice came from above his head,—

'Got him, Ram?'

'Yes, father; here he is.'

For the moment the midshipman felt disposed to descend again, but he kept on, and a minute later he looked up, to see Ram's frank face looking out of the hole, and the boy stretched out his hand.

'Want any help? Oh, all right then!'

'Did you think you'd get out that way, youngster?' said Shackle, as the midshipman stood erect at the top of the rough stairs.

'I thought I'd try,' said the lad stiffly.

'Took a lot o' trouble for nothing, boy,' said the smuggler. 'I come to see what was amiss, Ram, boy, you was so long. Don't come again without Jemmy Dadd or some one.'

'No, father.'

'So you thought you'd get away, did you?' said the smuggler, with an ugly smile. 'Ought to have known better, boy. You wouldn't be kept here, if there was a way for you to escape.'

Archy felt too much depressed to make any sharp reply, and the smuggler turned to his son.

'What's the matter with you?'

'Bit of a tumble, father, that's all,' said the boy cheerfully, as he placed his hand to the back of his head.

'You should take care, then; rocks are harder than heads. Hi! You Jemmy Dadd!'

'Hullo!' came out of the darkness.

'Get Tom to help you to-morrow. Bring a bushel or two o' lime stuff, and stop up this hole, all but a bit big enough for a pigeon to go in and out. It'll give him a taste o' light and air. Now, youngster, on with you. Show the lanthorn, Jemmy.'

The man came forward, and Archy was made to follow him, the smuggler and his son coming on behind; and ten minutes later the prisoner was seated in his old place in the darkness, with Ram's basket of provisions for consolation. As he sat there, listening to the departing footsteps, and feeling more and more that it was quite true,—escape must be impossible down the cliff, or else they would not have left him with the opening unguarded,—there was the dull, heavy report of the closing trap door, and the rattle and snap of bolts, and that followed by the rumbling down of the pieces of stone.

He had pretty well thought out the correct theory of this noise, that it was on purpose to hide the trap door from any prying eyes which might pass, and prying eyes must be few, he felt, or else the smugglers would not have had recourse to so clumsy a contrivance.

He thought all this over again, as he sat there wearied out and despondent, for in the morning his task had seemed as good as achieved, and now he was face to face

with the fact, after all that labour, that it had been in vain, and he was more a prisoner than ever.

'Not quite so badly off as some, though,' he thought, as, moved thereto by the terrible hunger he felt, he stretched out his hand for the basket. Not bread and water, but good tasty provisions, and—'What's this in the bottle?' he asked himself, as he removed the cork.

It was good wholesome cider, and being seventeen, and growing fast, Archy forgot everything for the next half-hour in the enjoyment of a hearty meal.

An hour later, just as he was thinking of going to the opening to sit there and look out at the evening sky, he dropped off fast asleep, and was wakened by the coming of two of the smugglers, who busied themselves in the repairs of the broken wall.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THAT day Jemmy Dadd brought him his food, and the next day, and the next.

'What did it mean?' he asked himself. He could understand this man being the bearer while he was employed at the mason work; but when that was over, he felt puzzled at Ram not coming.

Then he began to wonder whether the boy was ill in consequence of his fall, and he longed to ask, but, as everything he said to Dadd was received in gloomy silence, he felt indisposed to question the man, and waited, patiently or impatiently, till there should be a change.

The change did come, Ram appearing the next day with the basket; but his father and several other men entered the quarry, and something was brought in—what he did not see.

Ram came up to him with his basket, but, just as he began speaking, Shackle called him away, and once more the prisoner was left alone.

He partook of his meal, feeling more dull and dispirited than ever, and a walk afterwards to the little opening, just big enough to allow of his arm being thrust in, afforded no relief. For he wanted to talk to Ram about their

adventures, and to try whether he could not win over the boy to help him to escape.

The next day arrived, and, as of old, Ram came, with Jemmy Dadd left at the door.

'He's grumbling,' said the boy, 'about having to help watch over you.'

'Then why not put an end to it?' cried Archy, eagerly dashing into the question next his heart, for his confinement now grew unbearable.

'How?'

'Help me to escape.'

The boy laughed.

'Aren't you going to ask me how I am?'

'No; why should I?'

''Cause you made me have that fall, and my head's been trebble. I've been in bed three days.'

'I am sorry for you,' said Archy; 'but I can only think of one thing—how to get away.'

'No good to think about that. Father won't let you go; I asked him.'

'You did, Ram?'

'Yes, I asked him—though you wouldn't be friends and shake hands.'

'What did he say?' cried Archy, ignoring the latter part of his gaoler's remarks.

'Said I was a young fool, and he'd rope's-end me if I talked any more such stuff.'

The midshipman did not notice it, but there was a quiet and softened air in Ram's behaviour toward him, and the boy seemed reluctant to go, but, in the midshipman's natural desire to get away, he could think of nothing else but self.

'It would not be the act of a fool to set one of the officers of the Royal Navy at liberty.'

'He says it would, for it would be the end of us all here. The sailors would come and pretty well turn us out of house and home. No; he won't let you go.'

'How long is he going to keep me here?'

'Don't know. Long as he likes.'

That last sentence seemed to drive the prisoner into a fit of anger, which lasted till the boy's next coming.

The prisoner had been listening anxiously for the sound which betokened the visit of his young gaoler, and he was longing to have speech with him; but, telling himself that the boy was an enemy, he punished himself, as soon as the lanthorn came swaying through the darkness, by throwing himself down and turning away his head.

Ram came up and held the lanthorn over him.

'Morning. How are you?'

Archy made no reply.

''Sleep?'

Still no answer.

'You aren't asleep. Come, look up. I've brought you four plum puffs, and a cream-cheese mother made.'

'Hang your plum duffs and cream-cheeses!' cried Archy, starting up in a rage.

'Didn't say plum duff; said plum puffs.'

'Take 'em away then. Bread and water's the proper thing for prisoners.'

'Oh, I say, you wouldn't get fat on that.'

'Will you let me out?'

'No.'

'Then I warn you fairly. One of these days, or nights, or whatever they are, I'll lie wait for you, and break your head with a stone, and then get away.'

Ram laughed.

'What?' cried the prisoner fiercely.

'I was only larfin'.'

'What at?'

'You. Think I don't know better than that? You wouldn't be such a coward.'

'Oh, wouldn't I?'

'Not you,' said Ram, sitting down quietly, and making the lid of his basket squeak. 'You know I can't help it.'

'Yes, you can. You could let me out.'

'Father would kill me if I did. Why, if I let you out, you'd come with a lot o' men, and there'd be a big fight, and some of our chaps wounded and some killed, and if we didn't whop you, our place would be all smashed up, and father and all of 'em in prison.'

'And serve 'em right!'

'Ah, but we don't think so. That's what you'd do, isn't it?'

'Of course it is.'

'Well, then, I can't let you go. 'Sides, if I said I would, there's always Jemmy Dadd, or big Tom Dunley, or father waiting outside, and they'd be sure to nab you.'

'But you might come by night and get me out.'

'No,' said the boy sturdily, 'I couldn't.'

'Then you're a beast. Get out of my sight before I half kill you!'

'Have a puff.'

'Take them away, you thieving scoundrel!' cried Archy, who was half mad with disappointment. 'You come here professing to be civil, and yet you won't help me.'

'Can't.'

'You can, sir.'

'And you wouldn't like me if I did.'

'Yes, I should, and I never could be grateful enough.'

'No, you wouldn't. You'd know I was a sneak and a

traitor, as you call it, to father and all our chaps, and you'd never like me.'

'Like you! I tell you I should consider you my best friend.'

'Not you. I know better than that. Have a puff.'

'Will you take your miserable stuff away?'

'Have some cream-cheese and new bread.'

Archy made a blow at him, but Ram only drew back slightly.

'Don't be a coward,' he said. 'You're an officer and a gentleman, you told me one day, and you keep on trying to coax me into doing what you know would be making me a regular sneak. What should I say when you were gone?'

'Nothing,' cried the prisoner 'Escape with me. Come on board, and the lieutenant will listen to what I say, and take you, and we'll make you a regular man-o'-war's-man.'

'And set me to fight agen my father, and all my old mates?'

'No; you should not do that.'

'And you'd call me a miserable sneak.'

'I shouldn't.'

'Then you'd think I was, and I should know it, so it would be all the same.'

'Then you will not help me?'

'Can't.'

'You will not, you mean,' said Archy bitterly. 'You'd sooner keep me here to rot in the darkness.'

'No, I wouldn't, and I'd let you out if I could,' cried Ram, with animation. 'I like you, that I do, because you're such a brave chap, and not afraid of any of us. S'pose I was a prisoner in your boat, would you let me out?'

'That's a different thing,' said Archy proudly. 'I am a king's officer, and you are only a smuggler's boy.'

'I can't help that,' said Ram warmly. 'You wouldn't let me go because you couldn't, and I won't let you go because I can't.'

'Then get out of this place, and let me be.'

'Shan't. It's horrid dull and dark here, and lonesome. I shouldn't like it, and that's why I get mother to give me all sorts o' good things to bring for you, and save 'em up. Father would make a row if he knew. I do like you.'

'Get out!'

'Ah, you may say that, but I'd do anything for you now.'

'Then let me go.'

''Cept that.'

'Knock me on the head, then, and put me out of my misery.'

'And 'cept that too. I say, don't be snarky with me. You must stop here as long as father likes, but why shouldn't you and me be friends? I've brought you a Jew's harp to learn to play when you're alone.'

Archy uttered an ejaculation full of contempt, and snatched the proffered toy and hurled it as far as he could.

'It was a sixpenny one, and I walked all the way to Dunmouth and back to get it for you—twenty miles. It aren't much of a thing for an orficer and a gentleman, though, I know. But, I say, look here, would you like to learn to play the fiddle?'

'Will you take your chattering tongue somewhere else?'

''Cause,' continued Ram, without heeding the midshipman's petulant words, 'I could borrow big Tom Dunley's old fiddle. He'd lend it to me, and I'd smuggle it here.'



"'DON'T BE SNARKY WITH ME.'"

'Smuggle, of course,' sneered Archy.

'In its green baize bag. I could teach you how to play one toon.'

Archy remained silent, as he sat on a stone, listening contemptuously to the lad's words.

'I thought I could often come here, and sit and talk to you, and bring a light, and I brought these.'

He opened the door of the horn lanthorn, and produced from his pocket a very dirty old pack of cards, at which Archy stared with profound disgust.

'You and me could play a game sometimes, and then you wouldn't feel half so dull. I say, have a puff now!'

There was no reply.

'Shall I bring you some apples?'

Archy threw himself down, and lay on his side, with his head resting upon his hand, gazing into the darkness.

'We've got lots o' fox-whelps as we make cider of, and some red-cheeks which are ever so much better. I'll bring you some.'

'Don't,' replied Archy coldly. 'Bring me my liberty. I don't want anything else.'

'Won't you have the Jew's harp, if I go and find it?'

'No.'

'Nor yet the fiddle, if I borrow it?'

'No.'

'I say, don't be so snarky with me. I can't help it. I was obliged to do what I did, same as you'd have been if it had been t'other way on. Look here; let you and me be friends, and I could come often and sit with you. I'll stay now if you like. Let's have a game at cards.'

Archy made no reply, and Ram sighed.

'I'm very sorry,' he said sadly; 'and I'd leave you the lanthorn if you like to ask me.'

'I'm not going to ask favours of such a set of thieves and scoundrels,' cried the midshipman passionately; 'and once more I warn you that, if you come pestering me with your proposals, I shall knock you down with a stone, and then escape.'

'Not you,' replied Ram, with a quiet laugh.

'Not escape?'

'I meant couldn't knock me down with a stone.

'And pray why?'

''Cause I tell you agen you couldn't be such a coward. I'm going now.'

No notice was taken of the remark.

'Like another blanket?'

No answer.

'I'm going to leave the basket and the puffs and cheese. Anything else I can get you?'

Archy was moved by the lad's friendly advances, but he felt as if he would rather die than show it, and he turned impatiently away from the light shed by the lanthorn.

'I'll bring you some apples next time I come, and p'r'aps then you'll have a game at cards.'

There was no reply, so Ram slowly shut the door of the lanthorn, turning the bright light to a soft yellowish glow, and rising to his knees.

'Do let me stop and have a game.'

'Let me stop and talk to you, then.'

There was no reply to either proposal, and just then there came a hoarse—

'Ram a-hoy!'

'A-hoy!' cried the lad. 'I must go now. That's Jemmy Dadd shouting for me.'

Archy made no reply, and the boy rose, set down the

basket beside where he had been kneeling, and stood gazing down at the prisoner.

'Like some 'bacco to chew?' he said. Then, as there was no answer, he went slowly away, with the prisoner watching the dull glow of the lanthorn till it disappeared behind the great pillars, there was a faint suggestion of light farther on, then darkness again, the dull echoing bang of the heavy trap-door and rattle of the thin slabs of stone which seemed to be thrown over it to act as a cover or screen, and then once again the silence and utter darkness which sat upon the prisoner like lead.

He uttered a low groan.

'Am I never to see the bright sun and the sparkling sea again?' he said sadly. 'I never used to think they were half so beautiful as they are, till I was shut up in this horrible hole. Oh, if I could only get away!'

He started up now, and began to walk up and down over a space clear of loose stones, which he seemed to know now by instinct, but he stopped short directly.

'If that young ruffian saw me, he'd say I was like a wild beast in a cage. He'd call me a monkey again, as he did before. Oh, I wish I had him here!'

The intention was for the administration of punishment, but just then Archy kicked against the basket, and that completely changed the current of his thoughts.

'The beggar wants to be civil,' he said. 'He is civil. It was kind of him to bring the things to amuse me, and better food. Wants to be friends! But who's going to be friends with a scoundrel like that? I don't want his rubbish—only to be able to keep strong and well, so as to escape first chance.'

'Likes me, does he?' muttered the midshipman, after

a pause. 'I should think he does. Such impudence! Friends indeed! Oh, it's insufferable!'

Archy's words were very bitter, but, somehow, all the time he kept thinking about their adventure, and the lad's bravery, and then about his having saved him.

'I suppose he liked that,' said Archy, after a time, talking aloud, for it was pleasant to hear a voice in the solemn darkness, even if it was only his own.

He grew a little more softened in his feelings, and, after resisting the temptation for three hours, and vowing that he would keep to bread and water and starve himself before he would let them think he received their gifts, he found himself thinking more and more of the friendly feeling of the boy and his show of gratitude. Then he recalled all that had passed about the proposal to escape—to set him at liberty—to be his companion; and he was obliged to own that Ram had behaved very well.

'For him,' he said contemptuously, and then such a peculiarly strong suggestion of its being dinner-time reminded him that he ought to partake of food, that he opened the basket, and the temptation was resisted no longer.

Pride is all very well in places, but there is a strength in cold roast chicken, plum puffs, and cream-cheese, that will, or did in this case, sweep everything before it; and, after making a very hearty meal, the midshipman almost wished that he had Ram there to talk to as a humble companion in that weary solitude.

'He's a miserable, contemptible beggar,' said Archy at last, 'but I need not have been quite so rough with him as I was.'

CHAPTER XXX.

MATTERS grew no better. There was a leaning toward the rough lad, who seemed never weary of trying to perform little acts of kindness for his father's prisoner; but there was only one thing which the midshipman desired, and, as that could not be accorded, the friendly feeling between the two lads stayed where it was. In fact, it seemed to be turning into positive dislike on one side, Archy fiercely rating his gaoler over and over again, and Ram bearing it all in the meekest way.

The gloom was so familiar to Archy now that he could go almost anywhere about the great place, without stumbling over the loose fragments of stone, or being in danger of running up against the great pillars. And, as he roved about the quarry, his busy fingers touched packages and bales; he knew which parcels contained tobacco; he handled bales which he felt sure were silk, and avoided the piled-up kegs of brandy, whose sickly odour would always remind him of being ill at sea.

All these things occupied his mind a little, and when he was extra dull, he would go and lie down by the hole which admitted the salt sea air, or else make his way

right under the trap-door, and climb up to it, and sit and listen for the coming of Ram.

One morning he was there, wondering whether it was near the boy's hour, and he was listening most intently, so as to get full warning and insure time enough to go back to his place and wait, when he fancied he heard the bark of a dog.

It was not repeated, and he was beginning to think that it was fancy, when the sound came again nearer, then nearer still, till there was a prolonged volley of canine—words, let us call them, for they evidently meant something from their being so persistent.

'Why—hurrah! he has found me!' cried the prisoner excitedly; and he heard quite plainly, as he clung to the rough steps and pressed his ear against the trap-door, the eager scratching made by a dog, and the snuffling noise as it tried to thrust its nose down amongst the stones.

'Hi! Good dog then!' he shouted, and there was a furious burst of barking.

Then there was a sharp sound as if a heavy stone had fallen upon a heap, and he heard it rattle down to the side.

Then there was a fierce growl, a bark, and directly after silence.

The midshipman's heart, which had been throbbing with excitement a few minutes before, sank down now like lead, as he waited to hear the sounds again, but waited in vain.

If ever the loud baying of a dog sounded like music in his ear, it was during those brief moments, and as he sat there, longing to know what it meant, and whether his conjecture was right that the dog had scented him out, he faintly heard the gruff tones of a voice, and, hastily

descending, he went down the slope and made for his usual place.

'That's what it was,' said Archy to himself. 'The dog scented me out, and was scratching there till that great brute of a smuggler saw him, and threw a stone and drove him away. There they are.'

He was right, the rough pieces of stone were being removed, and a few minutes later he saw the swinging lamp coming through the gloom.

The prisoner was, as he said, quite right, for that day Celia Graeme had wandered down towards the edge of the huge line of cliffs in a different direction to that which it was her wont to take.

It was not often that she stirred far from the gloomy fir-wood at the back of the house, for her life had not been that of most young people of her age. Her father's disappointed and impoverished life, consequent upon his political opinions, and her mother's illness and depression, had made the Hoze always a mournful home, and naturally this had affected her, making her a serious, contemplative girl, older than her years, and one who found her pleasure in sitting on a fallen trunk in the sheltering woods, listening to the roar of the wind in the pine boughs, watching the birds and squirrels, and having for companion her dog Grip, who, when she took him for her walks, generally ran mad for the first hour, scampering round and round her, making charges at her feet, and pretending to worry her shoes or dress; running off to hide and dash out upon her in a mock savage way; bounding into furze bushes, chasing the rabbits into their holes; and then, as if apologizing for this wild getting rid of a superabundance of animal spirits kept low in the mournful old house, he would come as soon as she sat quietly down, crouch

close up to her, and lay his head on her knee, to gaze up in her face, blinking his eyes, and not moving again perhaps for an hour.

Celia seldom went seaward. The distance was short, but she was content to watch the beautiful changes on the far-spreading waste from high up on the hills. There had been wrecks on the Freestone Shore, which made her shudder as she recalled how the wild cries of the hapless mariners in their appeals for help had reached the shore; she had seen the huge waves come tumbling in, to send columns of spray high in the air, to be borne over the land in a salt rain, and, as a rule, the sea repelled her, and she shrank, too, from the great folds of the cliff, with their mysterious-looking grass-grown ledges and cracks, up which came the whispering and gurgling of water, and at times fierce hissings as if sea monsters lived below, and were threatening those who looked down and did not pause to think that these sounds must be caused by air compressed by the inrushing tide.

Then, too, there was something oppressing in the poorly protected shafts with their sloping descents, once, perhaps hundreds of years back, the busy spots where old hewers of stone worked their way down below the thinner and poorer strata to where the freestone was clean and solid.

These spots attracted and yet repelled her, as she peered cautiously down, to see that they were half hidden by long strands of bramble, with tufts of pink-headed hemp agrimony, and lower down the sides and archway infringed with the loveliest of ferns.

There was something very mysterious-looking in these ancient quarries where foot of man never trod now, and she shivered as she passed funnel-shaped holes which she knew were produced by the falling in of the surface to

fill up passages and chambers in the stone whose roofs had given way far below.

She often thought, when tempted by Grip in the direction of these weird old places, how horrible it would be if some day the earth suddenly sank beneath her, and she should be buried alive.

At such times her hands grew wet, and she retraced her steps, fancying the while that the earth sounded hollow beneath her tread.

Upon this particular morning Grip had vanquished her. He was always tempting her in this direction by making rushes and looking back as if asking her to come, for the dark holes tempted him. The rabbit burrows were all very well, but he could never get in them beyond his shoulders, while in these holes he could penetrate as far as he liked in search of imaginary wild creatures which were never found. Then, too, there were the edges of the cliffs where he could stand and bark at the waves far below, and sometimes, where they were not perpendicular, descend from shelf to shelf.

The morning was glorious, and the sea of a lovely amethyst blue, as Celia wandered on and on toward the highest of the hills away west of the Hoze. Grip was frantic with delight, his tail stood straight out, and his ears literally rattled as he charged over the short turf after some rabbit, which dodged through the bushes, reached its hole, displayed a scrap of white cotton, and disappeared.

And still, smiling at the dog's antics, the girl wandered on, nearer and nearer to where the land suddenly ended and the cliff went sharply down to the sea.

As she went on, stopping to admire the beautiful purple thistles, which sent up one each a massive head on its small stalk, or admired the patches of dyer's rocket and

the golden tufts of ragwort, the old fancies about the ancient quarries were forgotten for the time, and she seated herself at last upon a projecting piece of stone, away there in the solitude, to watch the grey gulls and listen to the faint beat of the waves hundreds of feet below.

There were a few sheep here and there, but the Hoze was hidden beyond a fold of the mighty hills, and Shackle's farm and the labourer's cottage were all down in one of the valleys.

It was very beautiful, but extremely lonely, and to right and left there were the great masses of cliff, which seemed like huge hills suddenly chopped off by the sea, and before her the wide-stretching amethystine plain, with a sail or two far away.

Celia sat watching a little snake which was wriggling rapidly along past her, a little creature whose scales looked like oxidized silver in the afternoon sunshine, and she was about to rise and try to capture the burnished reptile, knowing from old experience that it was harmless, when at one and the same moment she became aware that Grip was missing, and that Ram Shackle and the big labourer from the farm, Jemmy Dadd, were coming up a hollow away to the right, one by which they could reach the down-like fields that spread along the edge of the cliffs from the farm.

She saw them, and hardly realizing that they did not see her, she went on watching the reptile as it glided with easy serpentine motion through the grass.

'Ram is going to gather blackberries,' she said to herself, as she glanced at his basket; 'and Dadd is going to count the sheep. I ought to have brought a basket for some blackberries.'

She felt full of self-reproach, as she recalled how

plentifully they grew there, and how useful they would be at home. 'And I might get some mushrooms, too,' she thought, 'instead of coming out for nothing.'

Just then she heard Grip again barking very faintly.

'Stupid dog!' she said to herself, with a little laugh. 'He has followed a rabbbit to its hole. If he would only catch a few more, how useful they would be!'

Then she moved a little to follow the slow-worm, which was making for a patch of heath, and she was still watching it when, some time after, Grip came running up quickly, snarling and growling, and pausing from time to time to look back.

'Oh, you coward!' she said, sitting down and pulling his ears, as he thrust his head into her lap. 'Afraid of a fox! Was it a fox's hole, then, and not a rabbit's, Grip?'

The dog growled and barked.

'Poor old fellow, then. Where is it, then?'

The dog leaped up, barked, and ran a few yards, to stop, look back at her, and bark again.

'No, no, Grip; I don't want to see,' she said; and she began idly to pick up scraps of wild thyme and toss at the dog, who vainly kept on making rushes toward the slope of the great cliff.

'No, sir,' she said, shaking her finger at him. 'I am not going to be led to one of your discoveries, to see nothing for my pains.'

The dog barked again, angrily, and not until she spoke sharply did he obey, and followed her unwillingly up the slope and then down into a hollow that looked as if at one time it might have been the bed of some great glacier.

The dog tried again to lead her away toward the sea,

but she was inexorable; and so he followed her along unwillingly, till, low down in the hollow, as she turned suddenly by a pile of great blocks of weather-worn and lichened stone, she came suddenly upon Dadd and Ram, the former flat on his back, with his hat drawn down over his eyes, the latter busy with his knife cutting a rough stick smooth.

'How do, Miss Celia?' said Ram, showing his white teeth.

'Quite well, Ram. How is your head now?'

Oh, it's all right agen now, miss. On'y a bit sore.'

'You tumbled off the cliff, didn't you?'

'Off a bit of it,' said Ram, grinning. 'Not far.'

'But how foolish of you! Mrs. Shackle said you might have been killed.'

'Yes, miss, but I wasn't.'

'What were you doing in such a dangerous place?'

'Eh?' said Ram, changing colour; 'what was I doing?'

'Yes, to run such a risk.'

'I was—I was'—

Ram was completely taken aback, and sat staring, with his mouth open.

'Lookin' after a lost sheep,' came in a deep growl from under Jemmy Dadd's hat.

'Oh! And did you find it?'

'Yes; he fun' it,' said the man, 'but it were in a very dangerous place. It's all dangerous 'long here; and Master Shackle wouldn't let young Ram here go along these here clift slopes without me to take care on him.'

Ram grinned.

'And you take my advice, miss, don't you come 'bout here. We lost four sheep last year, and come nigh losing the missuses best cow not long ago. Didn't you hear?'

'Yes; old Mary told me, and Mrs. Shackle mentioned it too.'

'Ay,' continued Jemmy, without removing his hat, 'she fell slip-slap into the sea.'

'Poor thing.'

'Ay, little missus; and, if I were you, I wouldn't come along top o' they clifts at all. Grass is so short and slithery that, 'fore you knows where you are, your feet goes from under you, and you can't stop yourself, and over you goes. And that aren't the worst on it; most like you're never found.'

'Yes, 'tis very slippy, Miss Celia,' said Ram, beginning to hack again at his stick.

'I do not come here very often, Ram,' she said, quietly. 'It is a long time since I came.'

'Ay, and I wouldn't come no more, little missus,' continued Jemmy, from under his hat, 'for if you did not go off, that there dog'—

Grip had been looking on uneasily, and turning his head from one to the other, as each spoke in turn; but the minute he heard himself mentioned, he showed his teeth, and began to growl fiercely at the man.

'Look ye here,' cried Jemmy, sitting up quickly and snatching away his hat, 'if you comes at me—see the heel o' that there boot?'

He held up the great heavy object named, ready to kick out, and Grip bared his teeth for an attack.

'Down, Grip! Come here, sir. How dare you?'

But Grip did dare, and he would have dashed at the labourer if Celia had not caught him by the loose skin of his neck, when he began to shake his head and whine in a way that sounded like protesting.

'And me giving a bit of advice too,' said Jemmy in an ill-used tone.

Grip barked fiercely.

'Be quiet, sir!'

'And going to say, little missus, that if that there dog comes hanging about here, he'll go over them there cliffs as sure as buttons, and never be seen no more.'

'Come away, Grip. Thank you, Mr. Dadd,' said Celia, hurrying the dog away, and giving him a run down along the hollow; while Jemmy Dadd threw himself back, rolled over on to his face, and laughed hoarsely.

'I say, young Ram,' he cried, 'what a game!'

'What's a game?' said the boy sharply.

'That there dog; he won't forget that whack I give him on the ribs for long enough.'

'Needn't have thrown so hard.'

'Why not?'

'Don't like to see dogs hurt,' said Ram, who was dealing with an awkward knot.

'Oh, don't you! Why, if your father had been along here with that rusty old gun of hisn, that he shoots rabbits with, and seen that dog scratching among them stones, know what he'd have done?'

'No.'

'Well, then, I do. He'd have shot him. And if I ketches him ferretin' about there again, I'll drop a big flat stone down on him, and then chuck him off the cliff.'

'If you do, I'll chuck you down after him,' said Ram.

'What?' cried the man, bursting into a fresh roar of laughter. 'Oh, come, I likes that. Why, you pup! That's what you are—a pup.'

This was uttered with what was meant to be a most contemptuous intonation of the voice.

'Pups can bite hard sometimes, Jemmy,' said Ram slowly; 'and I shan't have Miss Celia's dog touched.'

'Ho! Then he's to come here when he likes, and show everybody the way into our store, is he? Well, we shall see.'

'Yes; and you'd better go and see if they've gone.'

'Ah, yes, lad, I'll go and see if they've gone; and we needn't quarrel 'bout it, for it strikes me as little missus won't come down here no more, I scared her too much.'

Jemmy burst into another hoarse fit of laughing, and went lumping off in his big sea-boots to see if Celia and her dog were well out of sight, before rejoining Ram to take the prisoner his repast.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THREE days passed, and the idea of losing her companion was so startling to Celia, that she made no further journey toward the cliffs, in spite of several efforts made by Grip to coax her in that direction. But on the fourth day there was so mean and unsatisfactory a dinner at the Hoze, of the paltry little rock fish caught by the labouring men, that, as Celia watched her mother partaking of the unsatisfactory fare, and thought how easily it might have been supplemented by a dish of mushrooms and a blackberry pudding, she made up her mind that the next day she would go.

'I could be very careful, and not go near any of the slopes running down to the cliff, and I could make Grip keep with me. Yes, I will go,' she said.

The next morning she partook of her breakfast quite early—a simple enough meal, consisting of barley bread and a cup of fresh milk from the Shackles' farm, and, taking a basket, she called Grip, who came bounding about her in a state of the most exuberant delight.

The dog's satisfaction was a little damped as his mistress took her way toward the fir-wood, and he kept making rushes by another path. But it was of no use; Celia had

made her own plans, and, as the dog could not coax her his way, and would not go alone, he had to follow her.

There was a reason for this route being chosen, for Celia did not care to be seen by Ram, or any of the men who might be pretending to work hard on Shackle's farm, which was ill tended, and consisted for the most part of cliff grazing land; but somehow seemed to need quite a large staff of labourers to keep it in such bad order.

By passing through the fir-wood, Celia meant to get out of sight of the cottages, and she went on, with the dog following sulkily behind, but reviving a little upon being given the basket to carry.

She trudged on for about a mile over the thin stony pastures, found a fair number of small, sweet, pink-gilled mushrooms where the turf was finest and richest, and gradually adding to her store of glistening bramble-berries till her finger-tips were purple with the stains.

The course she chose was down in the hollows between the hills, till at last she struck the one along which she had passed after leaving Ram and his companion, and turned down here, believing that, if the boy selected it, there would be good reason for his so doing. She walked steadily on, finding a button mushroom here and a bunch of black-berries there. For one minute she paused, struck by the peculiar sweet and sickly odour of a large-leaved herb which she had crushed, and admired its beautifully veined blossoms, in happy ignorance of the fact that it was the deadly poisonous henbane, and then all at once she missed Grip.

'Oh, how tiresome!' she cried excitedly; and she called him loudly, but there was no reply. A gull or two floated about and uttered their querulous calls, otherwise the silence was profound, and, though she swept the great

curved sides of the hollow, whose end seemed filled up by the towering hill, all soft green slope toward her, but sheer scarped and projecting cliff toward the sea, there was not so much as a sheep in sight.

With a great horror coming upon her, she hurried along towards the cliff, thinking of what Dadd had said, and picturing in her mind's eye poor Grip racing along some seaward slope in chase of a rabbit, and going right over the cliff, she went on almost at a run, pausing, though, to call from time to time.

It was intensely hot in that hollow, for the sea breeze was completely shut off, but she did not pause, and rapidly neared the cliff now, her dread increasing, as she wondered whether Ram would be good enough to get a boat, and row along under the cliff to find the poor dog's body, so that she might bury it up in the fir-wood behind the house, in a particular spot close to where she had so often sat.

No sign of Grip: no sound. She called again, but there was no cheery bark in response, and with her despondent feeling on the increase, she began to climb the side of the hollow, passing unnoticed great clusters of blackberries, whose roots were fast in the stones, and the fruit looking like bunches of black grapes; past glistening white mushrooms, better than any she had yet seen, but they did not attract her; and at last she had climbed so high that she could see the blue waves spreading up and up to the horizon, and about a couple of miles out the white-sailed cutter, which was creeping slowly along the shore.

'I wonder where that midshipman is,' she thought, forgetting the dog for the moment. 'How strange that all was! Could it really have been a dream?'

'Yes, it must have been, or else he would have gone and told his captain, and they would have come and searched the cellar, and there would have been sad trouble.'

She turned her eyes from the sea, and began to search the green slopes around, and then all at once she uttered a cry of joy as she could sight, on the highest slope right at the end of the valley, a white speck which suddenly appeared out of the earth, and then stood out clear on the green turf, and seemed to be looking about before turning and plunging down again.

It was quite half a mile away, and her call was in vain, and she began to descend diagonally into the hollow, the tears in her eyes, but a smile of content on her lips.

'Oh, you bad dog,' she cried merrily, 'how I will punish you!' and she stooped and picked a couple of mushrooms, quite happy again, and even sang a scrap of a country ditty in a pretty bird-like voice as she came to a bramble clump, and went on staining her fingers.

By degrees she passed the end of the hollow, leaving all the blackberries behind, and now, only pausing to pick a mushroom here and there, she began to ascend the slope toward where she had seen the dog.

'It is getting nearer the edge of the cliff,' she said; 'but it slopes up, and not down. Ah, I see you, sir. Come here directly! Grip! Grip!'

The dog had suddenly made his appearance about fifty yards in front, right as it were out of the grassy slope, to stand barking loudly for a few moments before turning tail and plunging down again.

'Oh, how tiresome!' she cried. 'Grip! Grip!'

But, as the dog would not come to her, she went on, knowing perfectly well that he had gone down one of the old stone pits, and quite prepared to stand at last gazing

into a hole which inclined rapidly into the hillside, but was as usual provided with rough stones placed step-wise, and leading the way into darkness beneath a fern-fringed arch, while the whole place was almost entirely choked up with the luxuriantly growing brambles.

'He has found a rabbit,' she thought to herself, as her eyes wandered about the sides of the pit, and brightened at the sight of the abundant clusters of blackberries, finer and riper than any she had yet secured.

'I wish I was not so frightened of these places,' she said to herself. 'Why, I could fill a basket here, and there can't be anything to mind, I know; it is only where they used to dig out the stone.'

A sudden burst of barking took her attention to the dog, who came bounding up the rugged steps right to her feet, looked at her with his great intelligent eyes, and, before she could stop him, rushed down again, where she could hear him scratching, and there was a sound which she knew was caused by his moving a piece of stone such as she could see lying at the side in broken fragments, and of the kind dug in thin layers, and used in the neighbourhood instead of tiles.

'Oh, Grip, Grip! and you know you can't get at him. Come here.'

'Ahoy!'

Celia was leaning over the rugged steps, gazing down into the darkness beneath the ferns, when, in a faint, smothered, distant way, there came this hail, making her nearly drop her basket as she started away from the pit.

The hail was followed by a sharp burst of barking, and the dog came bounding up again, to stand looking after her, barking again before once more descending.

Slowly, and with her eyes dilated and strained, the girl

crept back step by step, as she withstood her desire to run away, for all at once the thought had come that perhaps some shepherd or labourer had fallen down to the bottom, and was perhaps lying here with a broken leg.

She had heard of such things, and it would be very terrible, but she must know now, and then go for help.

In this spirit she once more reached the entrance to the old quarry, and peered down, listening to the worrying sound made by the dog, who kept rattling one piece of stone over another, every now and then giving a short, snapping bark.

'Ahoy!' came again, as if from a distance, and a thrill ran through the girl, bringing with it a glow of courage.

'It is some poor fellow fallen down;' and, placing her basket by the side, she began to descend cautiously, with Grip rushing to meet her, barking now joyously, and uttering whine after whine.

The descent was not difficult, and after the first few steps the feeling of timidity began to wear off, and Celia descended more quickly till, about fifty feet from the top, some distance under where the fringe of ferns hung, and where it had seemed quite dark from above, but was really a pleasant greenish twilight, she found beneath her feet a few loose flat stones, part of a quantity lying before her in the archway that seemed to lead straight on into the quarry.

But here, right at her feet, the dog began to scratch, tossing one thin piece of stone over the others upon which it lay.

Celia looked before her wonderingly, for she had expected to see a fallen man at once, probably some one of the men whom she knew by sight; but, in spite of the dog's scratching, she could not imagine anything was there,

and she was bending forward, gazing into the half choked-up level passage before her, when there came from under her feet the same smothered,—

'Ahoy!'

She started away, clinging to the side for support, and ready in her fear to rush back to the surface.

But the dog's action brought her to herself, as he began again to bark furiously, and tore at the stones.

'Hush! Quiet, Grip!' she said in an awe-stricken whisper, as she went down on her knees and listened, her heart beating wildly, and a

horrible idea, all confused, of some one having been buried alive, making her face turn ashy pale.

'Ahoy! Any one there?' came in the same faint tones.

'Yes—yes,' panted the girl. 'What is it?'

'Help!'

And then, more loudly,—

'Let me out, pray.'

'Oh,' moaned the girl, 'what does it mean?'

'Ahoy there!' came more plainly now. 'Whoever you are, get a boat, and go off to the cutter *White Hawk*. Can you hear?'

'Yes, yes,' said the girl huskily, as a horrible suspicion ran through her mind.

'Tell Lieutenant Brough that Mr. Raystoke is a prisoner, kept by the smugglers, and then show his men the way here.'

There was a pause, for Celia could make no reply; she knew who Mr. Raystoke was, and it seemed horrible to her that the frank, good-looking young midshipman should be kept a prisoner in such a tomb-like place as that.

'Don't, don't say you will not go!' came up in the smothered tones. 'You shall have a reward.'

'As if I wanted a reward!' panted Celia. 'What shall I do? What shall I do?'

'Help—pray help!' came from below; and Grip joined in.

'Yes, I will help you,' cried Celia, placing her face close down to the stones.

'What!' came up. 'I know you—the young—yes, Miss Graeme.'

'Yes,' she cried hastily.

'Pray help me.'

'I want to,' she said; 'but—but you will go and—and tell—about what you have seen.'

There was a pause, and then came faintly the words,—

'I—don't—want to; but—I must.'

'But I cannot—I cannot help you if you are going to fetch the sailors here, perhaps to seize— Oh, what shall I do?'

There was a pause before the prisoner spoke again.

'Look here,' he said; 'I don't want to tell about your father being mixed up with the smugglers.'

'You must not—you dare not!' cried Celia.

There was another pause, and then the prisoner's voice came again reproachfully.

'You ought to know it's my duty, and that I was sent ashore to find this out.—I say.'

'Yes.'

'Did you know I was shut up like this by those beasts?'

'Oh, no, no, no!'

'Your father did. He had me sent here, so that he should not get into trouble.'

'Indeed no! He would not do so wicked a thing.'

'But he is a smuggler.'

'It is not true!' cried Celia passionately; 'and if you dare to say such things of my dear, good, suffering father, I'll go away and never help you.'

'I can't help saying it,' said Archy sturdily. 'I'd give anything to get out of this dreadful dark place; but I must speak.'

'Not of him.'

'I don't want to speak of him,' said Archy, 'but what can I do? I must tell about all those smuggled things there in the cellar that night when you found me in that room—out of uniform.'

'Ah!' ejaculated Celia.

'I know it's hard on you, but I've been here a prisoner ever since, and it's enough to break one's heart.'

The poor fellow's voice changed a little as he spoke, and he would have given way if he had seen Celia's head bowed down, and that she was crying bitterly.

'You will send for help?'

'I cannot,' sobbed the girl, 'unless you will promise not to tell.'

There was a pause again.

'I can't promise,' came up huskily, in faint smothered tones. 'I say, is the door locked as well as bolted?'

'I cannot tell; it is covered with stones. Pray, pray promise me that you will not tell. I do want to help you to get away.'

'I can't promise,' said Archy at last, after a bitter struggle with self. 'I must go straight to my officer and tell him as soon as I get out.'

At that moment there was a sharp barking from the dog, who rushed up the steps to stand at the top for a few moments before coming down again.

'Won't you help me?'

'To send my poor innocent father to prison, said Celia in a low voice.

'I can't hear you,' came from below.

'And I can't tell you,' said Celia to herself. 'What shall I do—what shall I do?'

She stole softly up the rugged steps, with her fingers in her ears, in dread lest she should be called upon to listen to the prisoner's piteous appeals for help; and, as soon as she reached the top, she set off running as hard as she could go, to find her father, tell him all, and appeal to him to try and save the poor fellow from the cruel trials he was called upon to bear.

Celia could hardly see the direction in which she was going, for her eyes were blinded with tears, and so it was

that, when down in the lowest part of the hollow, as she hurried blindly along, she tripped over one of the many loose stones, fell heavily, striking her temple against a block projecting from the steep side of the little valley; and fell, to lie insensible for a time; and when she did come to her senses, it was to find Grip lying by her, with his head upon her chest, and his eyes looking inquiringly into hers, as if to ask what it all meant.

Her head ached, and she felt half stunned still, but she strove to rise to her feet, and sank back with a moan of pain.

For a worse trouble had discovered itself: her ankle was badly wrenched, so that she could not stand, and in the solitary place in which she had fallen, it was possible that she might lie for days and not be found, unless special search was made.

A sudden thought came—to tie her handkerchief about Grip's neck, and send him home.

The first was easily done, the latter impossible. Grip was an intelligent dog in his way, but nothing would make him leave his mistress there; and the poor girl lay all day in the hot sun, and at last saw that night was coming on, and that there was no help.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CELIA GRAEME took sundry precautions to avoid being seen, but she was not so successful as she imagined.

Jemmy Dadd was an old servant of Farmer Shackle, one who always made a point of doing as little as was possible about the farm. He did not mind loading a cart, if he were allowed as much time as he liked, or feeding the pigs, because it afforded him an opportunity to lean over the sty and watch the pretty creatures eat, while their grunting and squeaking was sweet music in his ear. He generally fed the horses, too, and watched them graze. Calling up the cows from the cliff pastures he did not mind, because cows walked slowly; and he did the milking because he could sit down and rest his head; but to thump a churn and make butter was out of his line.

Mrs. Shackle complained bitterly to her lord and master about different lots of cream being spoiled, but Farmer Shackle snubbed her.

'Can't expect a man to work night and day too,' he grunted. 'Set one of the women to churn.'

In fact, the farmer never found any fault with Jemmy, for the simple reason that he was his best worker on dark nights, and as handy a sailor as could be found.

Jemmy knew it, felt that he was licensed, and laughed to himself as he followed his own bent, and spent a good deal of time every day in what he called seeing the crops grow.

When there were no crops growing, he went to see how the grass was getting on, and to do this properly, he put a piece of hard black tobacco in his cheek, and went and lay down on one of the hill slopes.

He was seeing how the grass got on that particular morning with his eyes shut, when, happening to open them, he caught sight of Celia going along, a mile away, with her basket and dog.

He knew her by the dog, though even at that distance, as she moved almost imperceptibly over the short turf of the treeless expanse along by the sea, he would have been sure that it was Sir Risdon's child.

'What's the good of telling on her?' he growled to himself, as he lay back with his hands under his head; and in that attitude he rested for nearly three hours. Then, moved by the cogitations in which he had been indulging, he slowly and deliberately rose, something after the fashion of a cow, and began to go slowly in the direction taken by Celia hours before.

Jemmy Dadd seemed to be going nowhere, and as he slouched along, lifting up one heavy sea boot and putting it down before the other, he never turned his head in either direction. So stiff was he in his movements, that any one who watched him would have concluded that he was looking straight forward, and that was all.

A great mistake; for Jemmy, by long practice, had made his eyes work like a lobster's, and, as he went on, they were rolling slowly round and round, taking in everything, keeping a look out to sea, and watching the revenue

cutter, sweeping the offing, running over the fields and downs and hollows, missing nothing, in short, as he steadily trudged along, not even the few mushrooms that the pleasant showers had brought up, and placing them in his hat.

Slow as his pace was, the distance between the prints of the big boots was great, and the mushroom hunting took him, before very long, up the cliff beyond the entrance to the old quarry, then down below it, and then close up alongside, where he stooped over, and then went down a few steps out of sight.

He did not turn his head, for his lobster eyes had convinced him that no one was in sight, and, as he disappeared in the deep hole, he pounced upon the basket, and then went softly and quickly down to where the loose tile stones lay.

A rapid examination satisfied him that they had not been moved, and he went softly up again, basket in hand, stood still and rolled his eyes, but saw no sign of the basket's owner, and then, thrusting his arm through the handle, he went steadily back to the farm, where he thrust his head in at the door, stared at Farmer Shackle, who was innocently mending a net, and backed out and went into the rough stable.

Shackle followed him, net in one hand, wooden netting-needle in the other.

'Hullo!' he said.

Jemmy held out the basket.

'Well, I see brambrys and masheroons. What of 'em?'

'Little missus's basket. Fun' it.'

'Take it home. No—I'll send Ramillies. Ladyship don't like to see you.'

'Fun' it in number one!'

'What!'

'See her going along there with that dog. She must ha' smelled him out.'

'Place been opened?'

'No.'

Farmer Shackle scratched his nose on both sides with the netting-needle; then he poked his red worsted cap a little on one side with the same implement, and scratched the top of his head, and carefully arranged the red cap again.

'Mayn't have seen or heard anything, lad.'

'Must, or wouldn't have left the basket.'

'Right. Have big Tom Dunley, Badstock and two more, and be yonder at dark. Ramillies know?'

'Not yet.'

'Don't tell him. He's waiting yonder for you. Here he comes. Go on just as usual, and don't tell him nothing. I'll meet you soon as it's dark.'

'Pistols?'

'No. Sticks.'

'Jemmy there, father? Ah, there you are! Come on. I've been waiting such a time.'

Ram looked sharply from one to the other, and knew there was something particular on the way, but he said nothing.

'Get it out of Jemmy,' he said to himself.

'I'm ready, lad; I'm ready.'

'Look sharp, boy,' said the farmer.

'Yes, father,' said Ram. 'I'll go and get the basket.'

'Ay, do, boy. And look here—never mind more to-day; but take double 'lowance to-morrow, so as not to go every day.'

'Very well, father. Look sharp, Jemmy!'

The boy ran back to the house, followed by his father, who went on netting, and a minute later Jemmy and Ram were off over the bare pastures in the direction from which the man had come.

'Find that basket you give to father, Jemmy?'

'Ay, lad, half full o' brambrys and masheroons. Wondered whose it was. Gaffer says it's little missus's, and you're to take it up.'

'Oh,' thought Ram, 'that's what they were talking about;' and he began whistling, quite content, as they went wandering about mushrooming, till, apparently tired, they sat down close to the mouth of the quarry, where Jemmy's eyes rolled round for a good ten minutes before he said '*Now.*'

Then the pair rolled over to left and right, down into the hole, and descended quickly to the bottom, where the man crept right on along the half choked passage, took a lanthorn from a great crevice; there was the nicking of flint and steel, a faint blue light, and the snap of the closing lanthorn as the dark passage showed a yellow glow.

Meanwhile Ram had been busy removing the pieces of stone, laying bare a trap-door upon which were a big wooden lock and a couple of bolts. These he unfastened, threw open the door, and descended with his basket; while, after handing down the lanthorn into the black well-like hole, Jemmy climbed up again to the surface and stood with his eyes just above the level, sheltered by blackberry strands and other growth, and slowly made his eyes revolve; till, at the end of half an hour, Ram reappeared, when the business of closing and bolting the door went on, while Jemmy blew out the light, closed the lanthorn, through

whose crevices came forth an unpleasant odour, bore it back to its hiding-place; and then the pair departed as cautiously as they came.

'What did he say?' growled Jemmy.

'Oh, not much. Seemed all grumpy, and wouldn't answer a civil question.'

'Should ha' kicked him,' said Jemmy.

Very little more was said till they reached home, and Ram busied himself about the farm till after supper, wishing that he could help the midshipman to escape without getting his father into trouble.

He was thinking how horribly dark and miserable the old quarry must be, for the first time. The thought had not occurred to him before, through every hole and corner being so familiar, from the fact that scores of times he had held the lanthorn while his father's men carried in smuggled goods landed at the ledge, if there was plenty of time; for, if the landing had been hurried, and the danger near, the things were often carried up to the Hoze for temporary deposit till carts came to bear the things into the interior.

'I do wish he'd be friends,' thought Ram, when his musings were interrupted by his father saying,—

'Ah, there's that basket Jemmy found 's mornin'. Go and take it up to the Hoze.'

'He needn't go to-night, need he?' said Mrs. Shackle.

'You mind your own business,' said the farmer fiercely. 'Be off, boy.'

Ram put on his red cap, took the basket, and trotted off toward the Hoze, while Mrs. Shackle sighed, for she knew that something particular must be on the way, or Ram would not have been sent off, and her husband have prepared to go out directly after.

'Oh dear me, dear me, dear me!' said the plump, comfortable-looking woman, as the door closed on her husband's back. 'If he would only keep to his cows and sheep!'

'Here,' said the farmer, reopening the door, 'be off to bed. Ramillies need not know that I'm gone out.'

'No, dear. But do take care of yourself.'

'Yah!'

Bang went the door, and Mrs. Shackle, after putting a few things straight, went off obediently to bed, troubling in no wise about the door being left on the latch.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ARCHY RAYSTOKE was fast asleep, dreaming about being once more on board the cutter, with the sun shining full in his eyes, because he was lying on the deck, right in everybody's road, and Gurr the master was scolding him for it in a way which was very disrespectful to an officer and a gentleman, while the men grouped around grinned.

He was not surprised, for somehow Mr. Brough was not there, and Gurr had assumed the command of the cutter, and was playing the part of smuggler and pirate, and insulting him, whom he addressed again :

'Get up!'

Archy leaped to his feet, and saw at a glance that it was not the sun, but the light of a lanthorn shining in his eyes, while, before he could do more than realise that several men were standing close to him, half of a sack was drawn down over his head and shoulders, and a thin rope was twisted round and round his arms, fastening him securely, and only leaving his hands free.

'What are you going to do?' he shouted, after a vain struggle to free himself, and his voice sounded muffled and thick through the heavy sack.

'Pitch you off the cliff if you make so much as a sound,'

said a gruff voice by his ear. 'Keep quiet, and you won't be hurt.'

The lad's heart beat heavily, and he felt hot and half suffocated.

'Do you want to smother me?' he said. 'Can't breathe.'

'Slit the back of the sack, lad,' said the same gruff voice, and there was a sharp cutting noise heard, as a breathing-hole was cut right up behind his head.

'Now, then, bring him along.'

His hand was grasped, and, as he felt himself led over ground that was quite familiar now, he knew that he was on the way to the entrance.

Were they going to take him out, and set him free?

No; if they had been going to do that, they would not have blindfolded his eyes.

Yes, they would, for, if they were going to set him free, they would do so in a way that would place it beyond his power to betray their secret store.

Quick immatured thoughts which shot through him as he was led along, and he knew directly after that it was only fancy. Of course. He could show the lieutenant where the opening was in the cliff, and by knowing that it would be easy to track out the land entrance.

'No,' said the midshipman to himself sadly; 'they are going to take me and imprison me somewhere else, for they must now know that I was holding communications with that girl.'

'Now then, steady!' said a voice, as he felt that the cool air was coming down on to his head, and he breathed it through the thick sacking. 'Make a rope fast round him.'

'I must be at the foot of the way in,' thought Archy, as he felt a rope passed round him, and the next minute it

tightened, he was raised from his feet, and the rope cut into him painfully as he felt himself hauled up. Then hands seized him, and he was thrown down on the grass, while the last rope was cast off.

As he lay there being untied, though his eyes were blinded, his ears were busy, and he listened to the smothered sounds of the trap being fastened and the stones being drawn over it again.

'Trap-door—door into a trap,' he thought. 'Where am I going now? Surely they would not kill me.'

A cold chill shot through him, but he mastered the feeling of terror as he felt himself dragged to his feet.

'Now, then, keep step,' the same gruff voice said; and, with apparently half a dozen men close by him, as far as he could judge by their mutterings and the dull sound of their feet over the grass, he was marched on for over an hour—hearing nothing, seeing nothing, but all the while with his ears strained, waiting for an opportunity to appeal for help, in spite of the threats he had heard, as soon as he could tell by the voices that he was near people who were not of the smugglers' gang.

But no help seemed to be at hand, and, as far as he could judge, he was being taken along the fields and rough ground near the edge of the wild cliffs, now near the sea, now far away. At one time he could hear the dull thud and dash of waves, for a good brisk breeze was blowing, and he fancied that he had a glint of a star through the thick covering, but he was not sure. Then the sound of the waves on the shore was completely hushed, and he felt that they must either be down in a hollow, or going farther and farther away inland.

Twice this happened, and the third time, as all was still, and he could feel a hard road beneath his feet, he became

sure. There was an echoing sound from their footsteps, dull to him, but still plain, and it seemed as if they were down in some narrow cutting or rift, when all at once, just in front, after the men about him had been talking more loudly, as if clear of danger, there rang out a stern—

'Halt—stand!'

There was a hasty exclamation. Then came in the loud, gruff voice,—

'Back, lads, quick!'

He was seized, and retreat had begun, when again rang out:—

'Halt—stand!'

The smugglers were between two fires.

The midshipman was conscious of a familiar voice crying,—

'No shots, lads. Cutlashes!'

There was a rush; the sound of blows, men swayed and struggled about wildly, and the lad, bound, blindfolded, and helpless, was thrust here and there. Then he received a sharp blow from a cudgel, which sent him staggering forward, and directly after a dull cut from a steel weapon, which, fortunately for him, fell upon and across the rope which bound his arms to his sides. There were oaths, fierce cries, and the struggling grew hotter, till all at once there was a rush, Archy went down like a skittle, men seemed to perform a triumphal war-dance upon his body, and then they passed on with the fight, evidently consisting of a retreat and pursuit, till the sounds nearly died away.

A minute later, as Archy lay there perfectly helpless, the noises increased again. Men were evidently laughing and talking loudly, and the sounds seemed to come round a corner, to become plainer all at once.

'Pity we didn't go on after them? Nonsense, my lad! they know every hole and corner about here, and there's no knowing where they'd have led us,' said a familiar voice.

'Well, it is precious dark,' said another.

'Too dark to see what we are about. But I take you all to witness, my lads, they 'tacked us first.'

'Ay, ay: they began it,' came in chorus.

'And if it happens that they are not smugglers, and there's trouble about it, you know what to say.'

Archy heard all this, and it seemed to him that the party were about to pass him, when a voice he well knew growled out,—

'Hit me an awful whack with a stick.'

'Ay, I got one too, my lad; and I didn't like to use my cutlash.'

'Wish we'd took a prisoner, or knocked one or two down. Why, here is one.'

There was a buzz of voices, and Archy felt himself hoisted up.

'Can you stand? Not wounded, are you? Who cut him down?'

'Well, I'm 'fraid it was me,' said one of the familiar voices. 'Why, he is a prisoner ready made.'

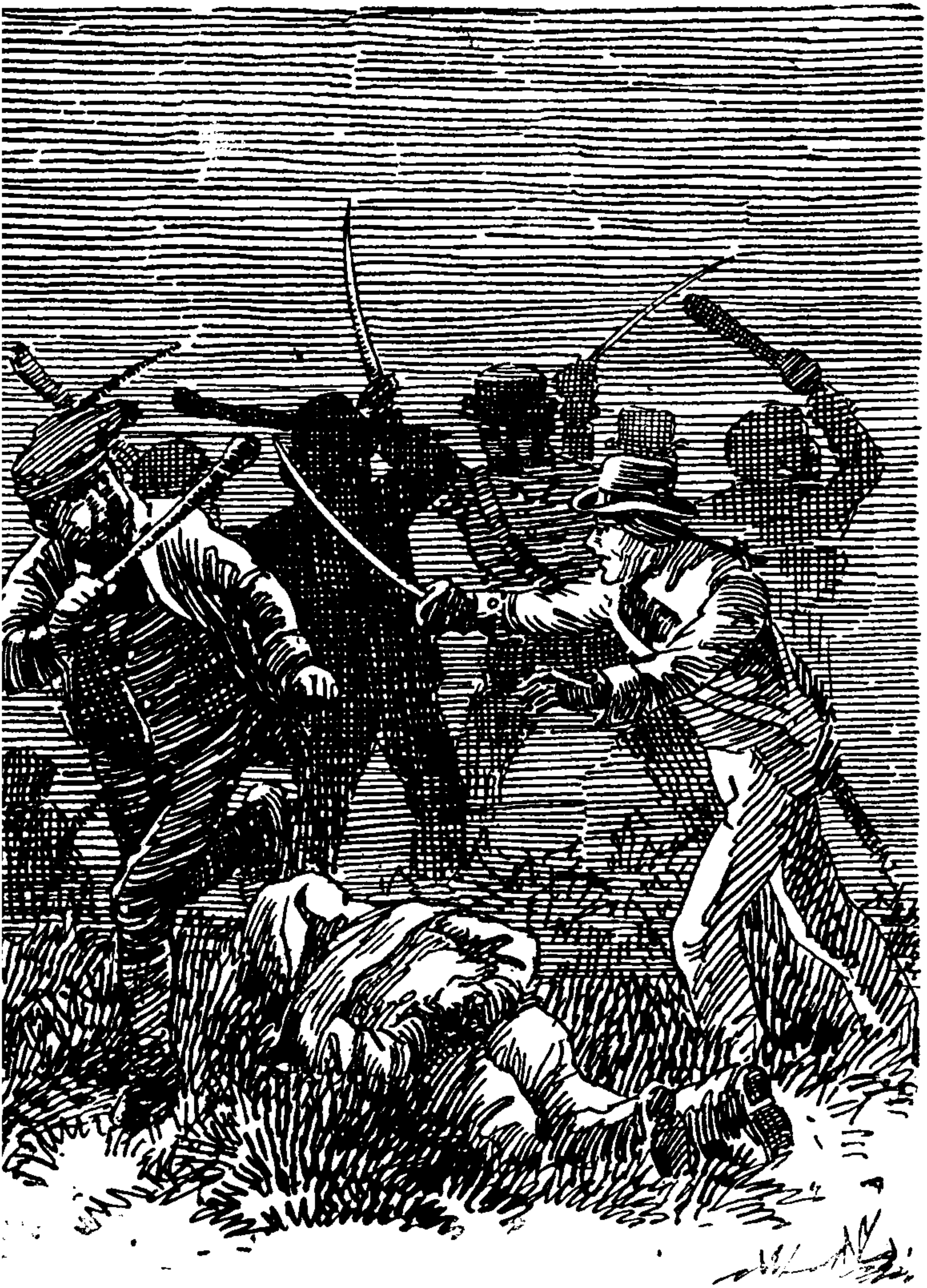
'What? Here, cut him loose, lads. Hullo, my lad, who are you?'

'Take this off,' panted Archy in a stifled voice; and then, as the sack was dragged over his head, he uttered a sigh, and staggered, and would have fallen, had not one of the men caught him.

'Hold up, lad. Not hurt, are you?'

'No,' said Archy hoarsely.

'Who are you? What were they going to do with you?'



"ARCHY WENT DOWN LIKE A SKITTLE."

'Don't you know me, Mr. Gurr?'

'Mr. Raystoke!'

The rest of his speech, if he said anything, was drowned in a hearty cheer as the men pressed round.

'Well, I am glad!' cried the master. 'We've been ashore a dozen times, my lad, and searched everywhere, till the skipper thought you must have run away.'

'Run away!' cried Archy huskily. 'I've been a prisoner.'

'Those were smugglers, then?'

'Yes,' cried Archy; 'but they shall smart for all this. I know where all their hiding-places are, and we'll hunt them down.'

'Hooray!' shouted the men.

'Were you looking for me?'

'Well, not to-night, my lad. Making a bit of a patrol,' said Gurr. 'The skipper thought that perhaps we might run against something or another, and we have and no mistake. But what's the matter? Not hurt, are you?'

'No, not much. I got a blow on the shoulder, and then some one gave me a chop with a cutlass.'

'That was you, Dirty Dick! I did see that,' cried one of the men.

'Well, I don't say it warn't me. How was I to know it was a orsifer in the dark, and smothered up like that?'

'Are you wounded, then?' cried the master excitedly.

'No; it felt more like a blow, but people kept trampling on me after I was down.'

'That's bad,' said Gurr, giving vent to a low whistle. 'Here, lads, let's carry him to the boat.'

'No, no!' cried the midshipman. 'I think I can walk. I could hardly breathe.'

'Well, go steady, then. It's on'y 'bout half a mile to the cove. Where did they mean to take you, lad?'

'I don't know. Perhaps on board some ship to get me out of the way;' and he briefly explained his late position, as they walked steadily on, the men listening eagerly the while.

'Then you can take me right to the place, Mr. Raystoke?' said Gurr.

Archy hesitated.

'I can point it out from the sea, but it will be all guess-work from the shore.'

'Never mind; we'll find it. But you can't think about where they were taking you to-night?'

'I have no idea. Of course they blindfolded me, so that I should not see the way out of the place I left, nor the way into the other.'

'Ah, well, come on, and the skipper will talk to you. He has been fine and mad about it, and I 'most think he's turned a bit thinner, eh, Dick?'

'Ay, that he have,' said the latter. 'Leastwise you might think so.'

'One day he's been all in a fret, saying you've run away, and that you'd be dismissed the service, and it was what he quite expected; and then, so as not to put him out, when you agreed with him, he flew out at you, and called you a fool, and said he was sure the smugglers had murdered his officer, or else tumbled him off the cliff.'

Archy was too weary with excitement to care to talk much, and he tramped on with the men, hardly able to realise the truth of his escape, and half expecting to wake up in the darkness and find it all a dream. But he was reminded that it was no dream, from time to time, by feeling a hand laid deprecatingly upon his bruised arm,

and starting round to see in the darkness that it was Dirty Dick, who patted his injury gently, and then uttered a satisfied 'Hah!'

'Pleased to see me back,' thought the midshipman, 'but I wish he wouldn't pat me as if I were a dog.'

'Hullo!' exclaimed the master just then, as they came opposite a depression in the cliff which gave them a view out to sea. 'What's going on? Forrard, my lads. Smart!'

The pace was increased, for away in the darkness there hung out a bright signal which all knew meant recall, and the midshipman's heart throbbed as he felt that before long he would be in a boat dancing over the waves, and soon after treading the deck of the smart little cutter.

'No,' he said to himself, as after a hail a boat came out of the darkness, its keel grating on the pebbly shore, and he uttered a sigh of content on sinking back in the stern-sheets; 'it isn't a dream.'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ARCHY RAYSTOKE'S sense of weariness rapidly passed off, as the oars splashed, and the boat glided softly out of the waters of the cove, between the two huge corners of rock which guarded the entrance, and then began to dance up and down as she reached out into the tideway. After the darkness of the old quarry, with its faint odour of spirits, the night seemed comparatively like noonday, and the pure, brisk air that fanned his cheek delicious. He seemed to drink it in, drawing down great draughts which made his bosom swell, his heart beat, and there were moments when, like a schoolboy upon whom has suddenly come the joys of an unexpected half-holiday, he felt ready to jump up, toss his cap in the air, and shout for joy.

'But it would be undignified in an officer,' he felt; and he sat still, feeling the boat live almost in the water as she throbbed from end to end with the powerful strokes, and glide up the waves, hang for a moment, and slide down.

'Tidy swell on, Mr. Raystoke,' said Gurr.

'Oh, it's glorious!' replied the lad in a low voice.

'Glorious?'

'Yes. You don't know what it means to have been shut

up in a place like a cellar, always black, and longing to see the blue sky and sunshine.'

'Well, there aren't none now, my lad.'

'No, Gurr, there is no blue sky and sunshine, but—but—this is delightful;' and he said to himself, with his breast swelling, 'I feel stupid, and as if I could cry like a child.'

They were nearing the cutter fast, her lights growing plainer, and the lad leaned forward with feelings that were almost ecstatic as he tried to scan her lines, and thought of leaping on her deck, and feeling the easy, yielding motion as she rose and fell to her cable where she lay at anchor. He even thought of how glorious it would be for there to come a storm, with the spray beating on his cheeks and then, as he involuntarily raised his hand to his face, a thought occurred to him which made him start.

'Oh!' he mentally ejaculated, as he thought of his long sojourn in the cave, and a feeling of satisfaction came over him that it was dark; 'what a horribly dirty wretch I must look!'

A hail came from the cutter at last, and was answered from the boat, Archy's heart beating fast as he dimly saw the figures on board, and thought of the joy of being once more in his own cabin.

'Gurr,' he whispered, 'don't say a word to Mr. Brough; let me tell him I have come on board.'

'Right, my lad; but you'll say we found you, and all that. You see, I must make my report.'

'Of course.'

Just then the oars were thrown up and laid alongside, and, as the lieutenant came to the gangway, Archy sprang on to the cutter so sharply that he came rather roughly in contact with his commanding officer.

'How dare you! Why, you clumsy young'—

Before he could say more, the midshipman touched his red cap.

'Come aboard, sir,' he said.

'Why? What? Mr. Ray— Oh, my dear boy!'



There was not a bit of official dignity in the greeting, for the plump little lieutenant, in his surprise and delight, caught Archy by the arms, then by the shoulders; stared in his face; seized his hands, shook them both, and was about to hug him, but, suddenly recollecting himself, he drew back.

'In with that boat,' he cried sharply. Then, giving the orders to slip the cable, and prepare to make sail, he turned to Gurr.

'I'll take your report directly, Mr. Gurr,' he said. Then, very stiffly, 'Take charge of the deck. Mr. Raystoke, follow me, sir, to my cabin.'

'Going to wig me,' said the midshipman, as he followed his officer down into the cabin and shut the door.

'Now, sir,' cried the lieutenant, turning upon him sharply, 'have the goodness to explain your conduct. Stop—not

a word yet. I entrusted you with an important commission. I dealt with you as if you were a man, an officer and a gentleman; and, instead of doing your duty, you went off like a contemptible cabin-boy on a shore-going game, sir—dissipation, sir—behaved like a blackguard till all your money was spent; and then you come sneaking back on board, insult me by blundering up against me, and all you've got to say for yourself is, "Come aboard, sir." Now, then, what else have you to say?'

'Well, sir'—

'Stop. Let me tell you that, knowing as I did what a young scamp you were, I refrained from reporting your conduct at Portsmouth, to get you dismissed His Majesty's service; and knowing, too, that it would break your father's and mother's heart, I did not write and tell them. For I said to myself, "He'll come back and ask forgiveness to-morrow, and I'll punish him and forgive him;" for I did not want to blast your career. But to-morrow has always been coming, and you haven't come till to-night. And now, what have you to say before—before I treat you—yes, I've a good mind to—like some mutinous scoundrel, and—What's that, sir, what's that? How dare you sit down in my presence, when'—

'I'm so done up, sir, and hungry and faint.'

'And serve you right, you insolent young dog. I knew it, and'—

'Oh, I say, Mr. Brough, you don't think I could have been such a beast.'

'What?'

'I found out all about the smugglers, but they caught me, and I've been a prisoner ever since. Do give me something to eat and drink, and don't scold me any more, till I've got on my uniform and had a good wash.'

'My dear boy! My dear Archy Raystoke!' cried the lieutenant, seizing his hands and pumping them up and down. 'Of course I didn't think it! Knew you were too much of a gentleman, but I was stuffed full of thoughts like that, and they would come out. Here,' he cried, 'drink that, and here's some cake sent from Poole, and—tip it up, and eat away. I am glad to see you again. God bless you, my dear boy! I'm your officer, but you don't know how miserable I've been.'

'Yes, I do, sir. I know you always liked me,' cried the midshipman, between the mouthfuls he was taking. 'But never mind the being prisoner, sir. I know all the scoundrels' secrets now, and you can capture them, and make some good hauls. You must send a strong party ashore as soon as it's day.'

'But—but'—

Archy answered those buts to such an extent that Gurr's report was needless, and the master was terribly disappointed.

By that time the cutter was slowly gliding away seaward, with every eye on the watch, for, as the lieutenant explained, after telling his recovered officer how he had searched in all directions, he had that night seen lights shown far up on one of the cliffs—lights which might mean a warning to some vessel to keep off, or just as likely might have the other intention, and be an invite to some lugger to land her cargo.

In any case the lieutenant meant to be on the alert, and hence the sailing of the cutter.

The lieutenant had hesitated a little at first after hearing his midshipman's report, but he now decided how to act.

'No,' he said; 'not to-night, my lad. I'm inclined to

think the signal was a warning to keep off. They may hide the cargo they leave ashore, and if we don't capture it, so much the worse, but our work is to crush up the gang more than to capture a few barrels and bales. We'll look out to-night, and, as soon as it is daylight, you shall make sure of the bearings of your prison, then we'll land a strong boat's crew, and go along the top of the cliff to the place, and put an end to that game. You shall make a good meal, and then have a sleep, ready for to-morrow's work. Hah!' cried the little lieutenant; 'that ought to mean a good day's business, Mr. Raystoke, and promotion to better jobs than this.'

'I hope so, sir,' said Archy, with his mouth full.

'No use to hope,' said the lieutenant dismally. 'I'm like poor old Gurr; they don't consider me fit for service in a crack ship; and when I make my report, and send in my despatches, and ask for an appointment, I shall be told I do my work too well on this important service, and that they cannot spare so valuable an officer from the station. Gammon, Mr. Raystoke, gammon! it's all because I'm so little and so fat.'

Archy was silent, for he knew it was the truth, and that such a quaint little fellow did not somehow quite command the men's respect.

Half an hour after, he was sleeping heavily, with the delightful sensation of being undressed and between blankets, to wake up with a start in the morning, by hearing Ram coming to the trap-door.

No, it was a noise on deck; and he sprang up and rapidly washed and dressed, to hurry up to see what was going on.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AS the midshipman reached the deck, it was to find that there was a light mist on the water, and that the lieutenant was at the side with Gurr, where they were watching a boat coming in from seaward.

The cutter was back not far from her old moorings, and the great cliffs of the shore were dimly visible.

'Lobster-boat, sir,' said Gurr, as Archy came behind them.

'Never mind! I'll overhaul her. I'm going to be suspicious of everything now. Take the boat, and— Ah, to be sure. Mr. Raystoke, take the boat, and see what those fellows mean. They're making straight for the ledge, and there is no one to buy lobsters there.'

'Ay, ay, sir!'

That familiar sea-going reply seemed to ring out of the lad's throat, and afforded him a pure feeling of delight. No more groping about in the darkness, biting his nails, and feeling heart-sick with despondency, but the full delight of freedom and an active life.

No lad ever sprang to his work with more alacrity, and, as he leaped into the boat, and the men dropped their oars, there was a hearty look of welcome in each smiling face.

'She has just gone into the mist there, Mr. Raystoke,' said the lieutenant; 'but she's making straight for that ledge, and you can't miss her. One moment. If the men seem all right and honest as to what they are going to do, see if you can get any information, but be on your guard, as they'll send you, perhaps, on some fool's errand.'

'Ay, ay, sir!' cried Archy again, as he took the handle of the tiller. 'Now, my lads, give way!'

The mist was patchy, thin here and thick there, but it seemed an easy task to overtake the boat, which had glided into the fog, going slowly, with her little sail set, and with only a man and boy for crew. She was about a mile away from the cutter, and about a quarter of that distance from the land when she passed out of sight, and the possibility of not overtaking her never entered the midshipman's head. All the same, though, he was well enough trained in his duties to make him keep a sharp look-out on either side, as they crept in, to make sure that the boat did not slip away under the cliffs to right or left unseen.

The mist grew more dense as they neared the towering cliffs. Then it seemed to become thinner, and, just as the midshipman was thinking to himself how glorious it would be if the man and boy in the boat should prove to be his old friends Ram and Jemmy Dadd, there came a peculiar squeaking sound from somewhere ahead.

'Lowering sail, sir,' said Dirty Dick, who was pulling first oar.

'Then we have not missed them,' thought Archy, as the men pulled steadily on, with the rushing, plunging noise of the waves beginning to be heard as they washed the foot of the cliffs. 'I'll be bound to say it is Ram and that big scoundrel. Oh, what a chance to get them aboard in irons

and under hatches, for them to have a taste of what they gave me!'

It seemed perfectly reasonable that those two should have been off somewhere in a boat, and were now returning. Who more likely to be making for the ledge, which, as far as he could judge, was a point or two off to the right.

All at once, after a few minutes' pulling, the boat glided right out of the bank of mist which hung between them like a soft grey veil, while in front, lit up by the first beams of the morning sun, was the great wall of cliff, the ledge over which the waves washed gently, the green pasture high up, and the ledges dotted with grey and white gulls. The picture was lovely in the extreme, but it wanted two things in Archy's eyes to make it perfect; and those two things were a background formed by the great cliff, down which he had crept, and the feature which would have given it life and interest—to wit, the fishing-boat containing Ram and Jemmy Dadd.

'Hold hard, my lads!' cried the midshipman, and the men ceased rowing, holding their oars balanced, with the diamond-like drops falling sparkling from their blades into the clear sea, while the boat glided slowly on towards the ledge, which was just in front.

'Why, where's the boat?' cried Archy excitedly, as he swept the face of the cliff with his eyes.

'She aren't here, sir,' said Dick.

'Well, I can see that, my man. Can she have slipped aside and let us pass?'

'No,' said one of the other men. ''Sides, sir, she was just afore us ten minutes ago, and we heard her lowering down her mast and sail.'

'Could that have been a gull?'

'What, make a squeal like a wheel in a block? No, sir, not it.'

'Then they have run her up on the ledge and dragged her into one of the holes. Give way!'

The men pulled in quickly, and at the end of a few minutes they were as close to the side of the ledge as it was safe to go, for, as the waves ran in, the larger ones leaped right over the broad level space, washing it from end to end. But there was no sign of the boat, and the midshipman hesitated about believing that the man and boy could have taken advantage of a good wave and run her right on.

'It's strange,' said Archy aloud, as he sat there thinking that, if he chose his time right, he might make his men pull the boat in upon a wave, let them jump out and drag her up the rocks.

But he shook his head, for he knew that if everything was not done to the moment, the boat would be stove in.

'Hullo! what are you shaking your head about?' he said sharply to Dick.

'Nothing sir, only you said it was strange.'

'Well, isn't it strange?'

'Ay, sir; so's the *Flying Dutchman*.'

'What? Why, you do not think any of that superstitious nonsense about the boat, do you?'

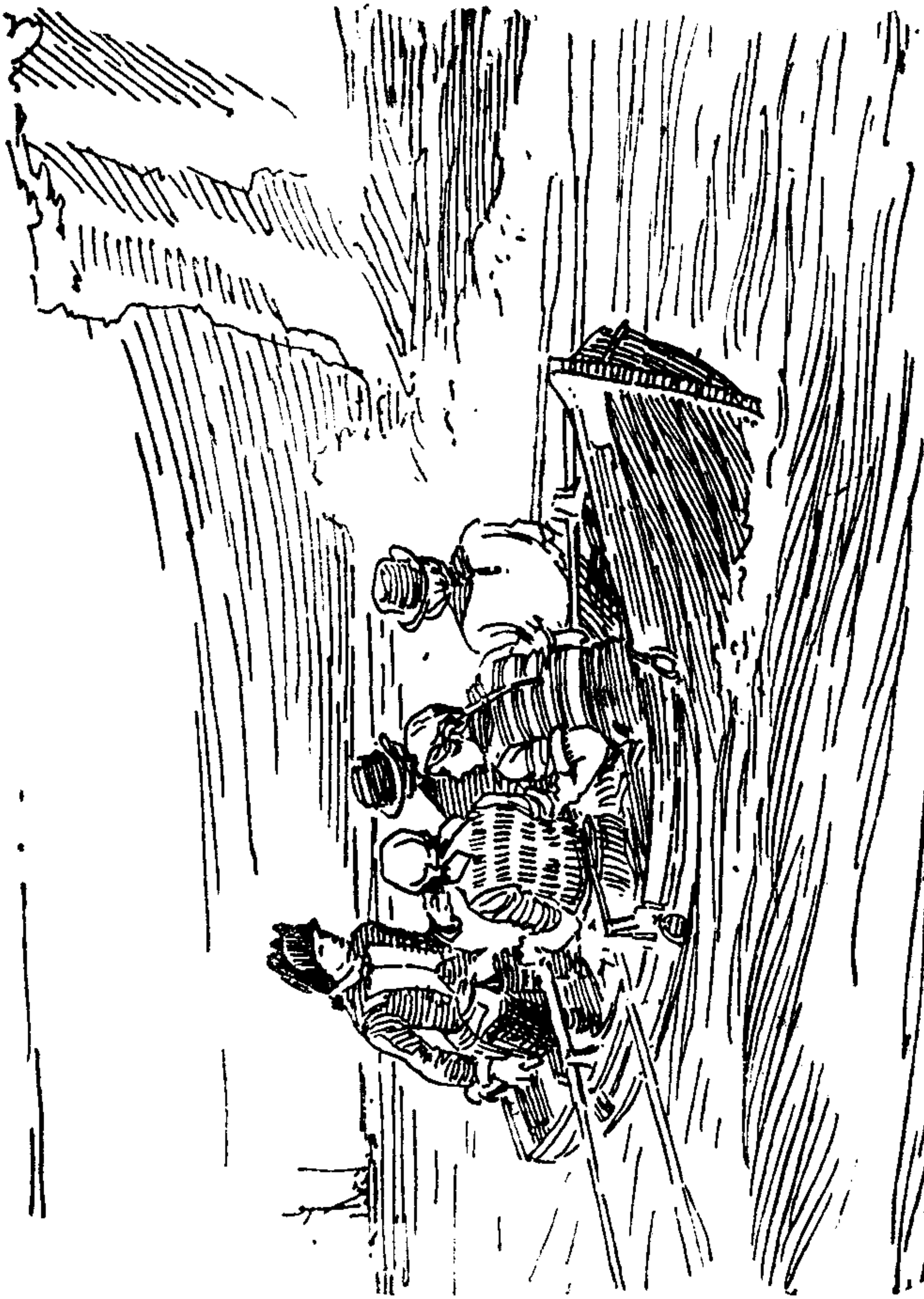
'Well, sir, I dunno. I only says, Where's the boat now? She couldn't have got away.'

'No,' said another of the men. 'She couldn't have landed there.'

'Nonsense!' cried Archy angrily. 'Absurd! Who ever heard of a phantom lobster-boat?'

Dick shook his head, and then sat playing with the handle of his oar.

'You Dick,' cried Archy, 'you're a goose! There, it will not be safe to land, my lads. Here, you two jump ashore



as we back in. Mind, just as the sea's oft the ledge; and run up and have a good look round.'

The boat was turned, backed in, and, seizing the right moment, the men jumped on to the rock just as the water was only ankle-deep, had a good search round, and came back, to be picked up again safely, though the boat was within an ace of being capsized.

But they had seen nothing. There was no boat, and they searched along some distance east, turned back to the ledge and went west, still without elucidation of the mystery; then they went as close under the cliffs as they dared go, in the hope of finding some cavern or passage through the rocks that escaped notice from outside.

All in vain, and, obeying the signal now flying on the cutter, the boat was rowed back.

'Well, Mr. Raystoke, where's the boat?

'Don't know, sir. We never got sight of her.'

'Then you must have been asleep,' cried the lieutenant angrily. 'There, breakfast, my lads, and be smart.'

After the meal, Gurr was left in the charge of the cutter, while the lieutenant accompanied Archy to search for the high cliff which contained the old quarry, and they rowed east for a couple of miles in vain. But, after pulling back to the starting-point, and making for the other direction, they had not gone four hundred yards under the cliff before the midshipman exclaimed excitedly,—

'There; that's the place: there!'

'Then why didn't you say so when we were on deck? you could have seen it there.'

'I could not tell without seeing it close in, sir; and besides it looks so different from right out yonder.'

'But are you sure this is right?'

'Oh yes, sir. Look, that's the place—where there is that narrow rift, and if you look high up there is a hole. There, I can see it plainly.'

'Humph! Can you? well, I cannot.'

'But you can see that broad ledge, sir, about two hundred feet up. That's where I climbed down to, and we had the struggle—that boy and I.'

'No, I can't see any ledges, Mr. Raystoke. There may be one there, but if you had not been upon it, I don't believe you would know that there was one.'

Archy looked up at the towering pile of rock, and was obliged to own that he was right. He shivered slightly as he swept the face of the cliff for the various points that had helped him in his descent, and, as he gazed out there in cold blood, it seemed to have been an extremely mad idea to have attempted the descent.

'Well, it is impossible to land here,' continued the lieutenant. 'You are certain that this is the place?'

'Certain, sir.'

'Good. Then we'll go back to the cutter, and this evening a strong party shall land. I'll lead them myself, and we'll try and surprise them. It's quite likely that the signals I saw last night may mean business for to-night. If so, we shall be on the spot.'

'Won't you go at once?' Archy ventured to observe.

'No, certainly not; what would be the good? We would be watched, of course, and the scoundrels would signal from hill to hill, and our every step would be known. This evening, my lad, at dusk. Now, my lads, give way.'

The boat was rowed rapidly from under the shadow of the mighty cliff, and the midshipman could not repress a shudder as he noticed how swiftly the current ran right out to sea, and fully realised what would have been the consequences to any one who had tried to swim along the coast if he had managed to descend in safety to the cliff foot.

Back on board the cutter there was a fair amount of bustle and excitement among the men, for, after months of unfruitful hanging about the coast, chasing luggers which proved to be empty, following false leads to get them off the scent or out of the way when contraband goods were to be landed, here was genuine information at last, the smugglers having, after such long immunity, placed themselves in the hands of the King's men.

Consequently cutlasses were being filed up, pistols carefully examined as to their flints and nicked off to see that they threw a good shower of sparks into the pans, and the men sat and talked together as eagerly as if they were about proceeding upon a pleasant jaunt, instead of upon a risky expedition which might result in death to several, and certainly would in serious injury.

'Yes,' the lieutenant said, 'rats will run away as long as they can, but when driven to the end of their holes they will fight.'

'But will they dare, do you think, sir?' said Archy.

'Dare! yes, my lad. You had a bit of a taste of it the other night when they were surprised in the lane. They will be more savage in their holes, and therefore, as you are so young, I should like you to go with the men, show them the way, and then leave them to do the work.'

Archy stared at him.

'Yes: I mean it. Of course as an officer you cannot shrink from your duty, but, as you are a mere boy, it is not your duty to go and fight against strong men who are sure to get the better of you.'

'But they are not all men there, sir,' said the midshipman, with a look of disappointment getting heavier in his face. 'There's a boy there—that young rascal who came

after the cow. I owe him such a thrashing that I must have a turn at him.'

'Ah, that's different,' said the lieutenant; 'and it will keep up appearances. But take care to confine yourself to fighting with him. And—er—I would not use my pistol, Raystoke.'

'Not shoot, sir?'

'Well—no. I want to destroy this wasps' nest, but in as merciful a way as possible. I have given orders to the men, and I wish you to mind too—I don't want to kill the wasps, but to make them prisoners.'

'Yes, sir, I see.'

'They are not French wasps, or Dutch wasps, but English. You understand?'

'Quite, sir.'

'That's right. Another hour and you may be off. You think you can find the place?'

'I do not feel a doubt about it, sir.'

'Well, it's going to be a dark night, and you and Mr. Gurr will have to be careful over your men. You had better keep as close to the cliff as you can, for, of course, the entrance must be somewhere near. I have given Mr. Gurr full instructions. You are to search and find the place, and if found hold it, but if you do not find it you will be back on board by daybreak, and another expedition must be made by day. If we can surprise them by night, when they think all is safe, it may save bloodshed. If we are obliged to go by day, they will have good warning, and be prepared to receive us, though they may be now. I wish I was going with you, but that cannot be.'

CHAPTER XXXVI

EVERYTHING was arranged on board, so that no watcher armed with a glass who scanned the ship should suspect that an expedition was on hand; but as soon as it was dark the men were ordered into two boats, one commanded by Gurr, with whom was Archy, the other by the boatswain, only leaving a very small crew on board with the lieutenant. Then they pushed off, rowing with muffled oars, and keeping right away from the cliffs, so that any watcher there should have no indication of their passing.

The quiet little cove was still a couple of miles away, when Archy suddenly touched the master's arm as he sat there holding his cutlass.

'Yes; what is it?'

For answer the midshipman leaned forward, and pointed to where, far back and apparently opposite to the cutter, a couple of faint lights could be seen high up and away from the cliff.

'Humph! Lights,' said Gurr; 'but they may be up at some cottage. What do you think?'

'I thought they might be signals.'

'Well, my lad, if they be, it's to bring the smugglers ashore, where we may have the luck to be in waiting for

'em. But before that the skipper may have seen them, and, though he's short-handed, they could manage to shake out a sail or two, and manage a gun.'

'You would not put back, then, after seeing these lights?'

'Not likely, with the orders we've got, sir,' said the master; and the men rowed on, and in due time reached the cove, where all was perfectly quiet, the tide falling, and as they landed quite a noisy tramp had to be made over the fine pebbles, in which the men's feet sank.

A couple of men were left in charge of the boats, the others were formed up, and, after passing the cottages of the few fishermen of the place, the party struck off for the top of the cliffs, to follow the rugged, faint track which was more often lost, and the arduous tramp was continued hour after hour, till, partly from the schooner's lights, partly from his idea of the run of the coast, the late prisoner began to calculate that they must be approaching the land side of the large cliff.

It had been a terrible walk in the darkness, for the cliff tops were as if a gigantic storm had taken place when that part of the coast was formed, and a series of mountainous—really mountainous—waves had run along and became suddenly congealed, leaving sharp-crested hill and deeply grooved valley, which had to be climbed and descended in turn, till the men vowed that the distance was double what it would have been by road, and they certainly were not exaggerating much.

It was only here and there that the party had been able to follow the edge of the cliff. For the most part prudence forced them to keep well in, but at times they had some arduous climbs, and walked along the sides of slopes of thin short grass, covered with tiny snails, whose shells

crushed beneath their feet with a peculiar crisp sound; and had it been daylight, the probabilities were that they would have given these risky spots a wider berth.

'Call a halt, Gurr,' whispered Archy at last; and it was done. Then, giving the master his ideas, the men were allowed a few minutes' breathing space before being formed in a line, with a space of a few yards between the men, one end of the line being close to the edge of the cliff, the other some distance inland.

In this way the men were instructed to walk slowly on, scanning every depression and clump of bared stone carefully, and at a word uttered by the man who felt that he had found any place likely to prove to be an entrance to a cave or quarry, all were to halt, the word was to be passed along, and the officers were to examine the place before the line went on again.

The plan was good, and the long line swept slowly along, the halt being called soon after they had started, but the stoppage was in vain, the midshipman and Gurr finding before them only a rough piled-up collection of stones from which the earth had in the course of ages crumbled or been washed away.

On again in the darkness, the officers pacing along portions of the line to urge on the men to be careful, and warning those near the cliff edge.

The advice was needed, for all at once, just as Archy was leaving the edge, there was a faint cry; the halt was called, and the young officer, closely followed by Dick, went quickly to the spot from whence the cry had come.

'It's Bob Harris, sir,' said the last man they reached. 'I see him a moment ago, and heard him cry out, and then he was gone.'

With his blood seeming to chill, Archy crept in the

darkness close to the cliff edge, to find that it sloped down where he stood.

'Give me your hand, Dick,' he whispered.

'Lie down, my lad, and I'll go down too,' said the sailor in a husky voice, which told of the horror he felt.

It was good advice, and the midshipman was putting it in force just as Gurr came tearing up.

'What is it?' he panted.

'Bob Harris gone over, sir,' whispered Dick.

'And no rope with us!' exclaimed the master. 'See anything, my lad?'

'Yes; he is just below here on a ledge. Hi! are you hurt?'

'No, sir,' came up faintly; 'but I durstn't move, or I should go over.'

'Lie still, then, till we pull you up. Mr. Gurr, I can almost touch him. I could, if some one lowered me a little more.'

'No, no, my lad, no, no!' whispered the master. 'Here, Dick, and you,' he said in short, quick, decisive tones, as he lay down and looked over. 'Now, then, four more men here. Now, who'll volunteer to lean over and get a good grip of him, while we hold by your legs?'

'I will,' said Dick. ''Spose I'm as strong as any on 'em. But who's going to hold my legs?'

'Two men, my lad, and there'll be others to hold them.'

'Right,' said Dick shortly; and the men lay down, forming themselves into a human chain, the end of which —Dick—was lowered slowly down the slope and over the edge.

'Look here, my man,' said Archy, as he lay with his head and chest over the edge of the awful precipice, listening to the faint beat of the waves, and involuntarily

thinking of his adventure with Ram, 'as soon as Dick grips you, get tight hold of him too.'

'Ay,' came up in a hoarse whisper. 'Please be quick. I feel as if I was going.'

'Now,' said the master, 'ready, lads? Steady! You, Dick, give the word yourself to lower away.'

'Ay, ay, sir; lower away.' Then again, 'Lower away! Lower away!'

The suspense in the darkness seemed strained to breaking point, and Archy lay with his heart beating painfully, watching till it seemed as if the case was hopeless, and that if Dick, now nearly off the cliff, could grip hold of the fallen man, they would never be able to get him and his burden back.

''Nother inch,' came up out of the void. 'Touched him. 'Nother inch!'

At each order, given in a hoarse, smothered way, the men shuffled themselves forward a little, and lowered Dick down.

'Just a shade more, my lads,' came up.

'Can't!' said one of the men who held one of Dick's legs.

'Right. Got him,' came up, as a thrill of horror ran along the chain at that word *can't*. 'Haul away!'

How that hauling up was managed the midshipman hardly knew, but he had some consciousness of having joined in the efforts made, by seizing one man of the human chain, and dimly seeing Gurr and two other men of the group now gathered about them lend their aid. Then there was a scuffling and dragging, a loud panting, and, with a few adjurations to 'hold on,' and 'haul,' and 'keep tight,' Dick and the man he had been lowered down to save were dragged into safety.



'Phew!' panted Dick. 'Look here, Bob Harris—never no more, my lad, never no more!'

'Bravely done, Dick,' whispered Gurr.

'Thank ye, sir. But, never no more. I want to be a good mate to everybody, but this here's a shade too much.'

'And I'd take it kindly, Master Raystoke, sir,' said the man the midshipman had gripped, 'if nex' time, sir, you wouldn't mind grappling my clothes only. You're tidy strong now, and I can't answer for my flesh if you take hold like that.'

'Hush! no talking,' said the master. 'Dick, take the outside

now, and be careful. Form your line again. Bob Harris, take the far left.'

'Well, Master Raystoke, sir,' grumbled Dick, 'I call that giving a fellow a prize. Saves that chap, and here am I.'

'Post of honour, Dick. Go slowly, and not too near.'

'Not too nigh it is, sir,' said Dick, with a sigh; and a minute later the word was given, and they went on once more.

One hundred, two hundred, three hundred yards, but no sign.

Then a discovery was made, and by the midshipman.

They had come to the descent on the far side of the vast hill by whose top they had been searching. There was a stiff slope beyond, and another mass of cliff loomed up, rising dimly against the sky, in a way that made Archy feel certain that, though so far their search had been in vain, they had now before them the huge cliff which held the smugglers' store.

The midshipman felt so assured of this, that he whispered his belief freely to Gurr, as he encountered him from time to time perambulating the line of men, but the old master received the communication rather surlily.

'All guess-work, my lad,' he said. 'We're working wrong way on. These great places would puzzle a monkey, and we shan't find the hole unless we come by daylight, and leave a boat off-shore to signal to us till we get over the spot.'

'What's that?' cried Archy excitedly, as one of the men on his left uttered a sharp, 'Look out!'

'Sheep, I think, sir.'

'No, it was a dog,' said another.

'Hi! stop him!' cried a third. 'Boy!'

There was a rush here and there in the darkness, the line being completely broken, and the men who composed it caught sight from time to time of a shadowy figure to which they gave chase as it dodged in and out of the bushes, doubling round masses of weather-worn stone, plunging into hollows, being lost in one place and found in another, but always proving too active for its pursuers, who stumbled about among the rough ground and dangerous slopes. Here for a moment it was lost in a damp hollow full of a high growth of marestail (*equisetum*), that curious whorled relic of ancient days; driven from that by a regular course of beating the ground, it led its pursuers upward among rough tumbled stones where the brambles tripped them, and here they lost it for a time. But, growing hotter in the chase, and delighted with the sport, which came like a relief from their monotonous toil, the Jacks put their quarry up again, to get a dim view of it, and follow it in full cry, like a pack of hounds, over the rounded top of the hill, down the other side into a damp hollow full of tall reeds, through which the men had to beat again, panting and regaining their breath, but too excited by the chase to notice the direction in which they had gone, and beyond hearing of the recall shouted by their officers.

The midshipman joined as eagerly in the chase as any of the men, forgetting at the moment all about discipline, formation, and matters of that kind, for in one glimpse which he had of the figure, he made certain that it was Ram, whom they had surprised just leaving the entrance to the cave; and it was not until he had been joined in the hunt for about a quarter of an hour, that he felt that the men ought instantly to have been stopped, and the place around thoroughly searched.

'How vexatious!' he cried to himself, as he panted on alone, always in dread of coming suddenly upon the edge of the cliff, and trembling lest in their excitement the men might go over.

All regrets were vain now, and he kept on following the cries he heard, first in one direction and then in another, till at last, after a weary struggle through a great patch of brambles and stones, he found himself quite alone and left behind.

But his vanity would not accept this last.

'I've quite out-run them,' he said, half aloud, as he peered round through the gloom, listening intently the while, but not a sound could be heard, and in his angry impatience he stamped his foot upon the short dry grass.

'What an idiot I am for an officer!' he cried. 'Leading men and letting them bolt off in all directions like this. Suppose the smugglers should turn upon us now!'

'They would not have any one to turn upon,' he added, after a pause.

'Well, it's all over with anything like a surprise,' he continued, after a time, 'and we must get back to the place where we started from, if we can find it.'

'I'll swear that was Ram,' he said, as he trudged on up a steep hillside; 'and if they have caught him, we'll make him show us the way. Stubborn brute! He was too much for me in the quarry, but out here with the men about, I'll make him sing a different tune.'

'Where can they be?' he cried, after wandering about for quite half an hour. Why! Ah!' he ejaculated. 'I can see it all now. It was Ram, and he was playing peewit. The cunning rascal! Oh, if I only get hold of him!

'Yes; there's no doubt about it, and he has been too

clever for us. He was watching by the entrance, and just as the men got up, and would have found it, he jumped up and dodged about, letting the men nearly catch him, and then running away and leading them farther and farther on.'

'Never mind. I'll get the men together, and we'll go back to the place and soon find it. Oh, how vexatious! Which way does the sea lie?'

There was not a star to be seen, and the night was darker than ever.

He listened, but the night was too calm for the waves to be heard at the foot of the cliffs, and, gaze which way he would, there was nothing but dimly seen rugged ground with occasional slopes of smooth, short grass.

'Ahoy!' he cried at last, and 'Ahoy!' came back faintly.

'Hurrah!' he said, after answering again, and walking in the direction from which the cry came, downward in one of the combe-like hollows of the district. 'No one need be lost for long, if he has a voice. Don't hear any of the others though.'

He shouted again and again, getting answers, and gradually diminishing the distance, till he saw dimly the figure of a stoutly built man, and the next minute he was saluted with,—

'Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Raystoke? Pretty run you've led me. Pray what sort of a game do you call this?'

'Game, sir!' said Archy ruefully; 'it's horribly hard work!'

'Hard work! To you, sir—a mere boy! Then what do you suppose it is to me? I have hardly a breath left in me.'

'But where are the men Mr. Gurr?'

'The men, Mr. Raystoke, sir? That's what I was going to ask you. Now just have the goodness to tell me what you mean by forgetting all the discipline you have been taught, and leading these poor chaps off on such a wild-goose chase.'

'I, Mr. Gurr?' said Archy in astonishment.

'Yes, sir, you, sir. What am I to say to Mr. Brough when we get back? I am in command of this expedition, and you lead the men away like a pack of mad March hares, and now I find you here without them. Where are they?'

'I don't know, sir.'

'You don't know!'

'I thought they were with you.'

'And you took them away and left them?'

'I didn't take them away!' cried the midshipman angrily.

'Then where are they, sir?'

'I don't know. You were close by me when they rushed off after that boy.'

'Sheep, sir.'

'No, no, Mr. Gurr; boy—Ram.'

'Well, I said sheep, Mr. Raystoke.'

'No, no, boy; that's his name—Ram.'

'Nonsense, sir; it was a sheep, and if it was not, it was a dog.'

'I tell you, sir, it was the smuggler's boy, Ram,—the one who came aboard after the cow.'

'Hang the cow, sir! I want my men. Do you think I can go back on board without them. Why, it's high treason for a naval officer to let one man slip away, and here you have let two boats' crews go. I say once more, how am I to face Mr. Brough?'

'I don't know, Mr. Gurr,' said Archy, who was growing vexed now at the blame being thrown on his shoulders. 'You were in command of the expedition, and the bos'n was in charge of the second boat's crew. I don't see how I am to blame.'

'But you led the men away, sir.'

'Not I, Mr. Gurr. I joined in the chase, and I tried to get the boys together, but they scattered everywhere.'

'But it really is awkward, Mr. Raystoke, isn't it?'

'Horribly, sir. Got anything to eat?'

'To eat? No, my lad. But—tut—tut—tut! I can't hear them anywhere.'

'Nor I, sir.'

'Well, we must not stand here. But what did you say?—I did not see what it was; they went off after a boy?'

The master spoke so civilly now that Archy forgot his anger, and entered into the trouble warmly.

'Yes,' he said; 'and it was a plan. That boy is as cunning as can be. We must have been close up to the way into the cave when he started out and led us all away from it.'

'Eh?'

'I say he jumped up and dodged about, knowing the place by heart, and kept hiding and running off again, to get us right away from the entrance.'

'That's it—that's it, Mr. Raystoke. Don't try any more, sir. You've hit it right in the bull's eye.'

'You think so?'

'No, sir; I'm sure of it. A young fox. Now as soon as we've taken him prisoner, I'll put the matter before Mr. Brough in such a way that the young scamp will be tied up, and get four dozen on the bare back.'

'Hadn't we better catch him first, Mr. Gurr?'

'Right, Mr. Raystoke. Come on then; and the first thing is to get the men together. We shall catch him, never you fear that. These cunning ones generally get caught first. Now then, sir, let's listen.'

They listened, but there was not a sound.

''Pon my word! This is a pretty state of affairs!' cried the master. 'What do you propose next?'

'Let's get right up to the top of this place and hail.'

'That's good advice, Mr. Raystoke, sir: so come on.'

They started at once, and at the end of ten minutes they were at the top of a hill, but upon gazing round they could only dimly see other hills similar to the one on which they stood,—regular earth-waves of the great convulsion which had thrown the strata of the Freestone Shore into a state of chaos,—but nothing more.

'I'll hail,' said Archy; and he shouted, but there was no reply.

'The scoundrels!' cried the master angrily. 'Ther've all together in some public-house drinking, and glad to get away from us. Eh? What are you laughing at?'

'There are no public-houses out in this wild place, Mr. Gurr.'

'Eh? Well, no, I suppose not. I'll hail. Ahoy!'

A faint echo in reply. That was all.

'Which way shall we go?'

'I don't know, Mr. Gurr.'

'Can't make out which is the north, can you?'

'No, sir, nor the south neither.'

'Humph! I think I could find the south if you told me which was the north,' said the master drily. 'Well, we must do the best we can. Let's strike along here. I seem to feel that this is the right direction.'

Archy felt that it was the wrong direction, but, as he could not point out the right, he followed his leader for about a quarter of a mile, both pausing to shout and listen from time to time.

All at once Gurr came to a dead stop.

'I feel as if we're going wrong,' he said. 'You choose this time.'

'Let's try this way,' said Archy, selecting the route because it was down hill; but a quarter of an hour of this did not satisfy him, and he too stopped dead short.

'I feel just as much lost as I did in the dark in that cave, Mr. Gurr,' he said.

'Never mind, my lad,' said the master good-humouredly. 'It's all an accident, and nobody's fault. Wish I had my pipe.'

'Ahoy!' shouted Archy, but there was no reply.

'I'd sit down and wait for morning, only conscience won't let me.'

'Well, let's try this way,' suggested Archy.

'Seems to me, my lad, that it don't matter which way we take, we only go wandering in and out among the stones and brambles and winding all sorts of ways. Never mind; we must keep moving, so come on.'

They trudged on for how long they could not tell, but both were getting exceedingly weary, and as ignorant now ever as to their whereabouts; for, whether the direction they followed was east, west, south, or north, there was no indication in the sky; and they kept on, always cautiously, in dread and yet in hope that they might come upon the edge of the cliff, which would solve their difficulty at once, if they could see the cutter's lights.

'Though that aren't likely, Mr. Raystoke. Strikes me that he'll lie there, and not show a light, on the chance of

a smuggling lugger coming along, though that's hardly our luck.'

'I don't know,' said Archy bitterly. 'Seems just the time for her to come when the skipper's so short-handed that he can't attack.'

'Yes, we are an unlucky craft and no mistake, and I 'most wish sometimes I'd never sailed in her. Look here, for instance, here's a chance for us.'

'Hist! listen!' whispered Archy.

'What is it?'

'A hail right in the distance.'

'No such luck, my lad. I don't know how I'm going to face Mr. Brough. Hark!'

'Yes; there it is again, away to the left. Yes; there it goes. Ahoy!'



They stopped and listened after the midshipman had hailed as loudly as he could; and, to the intense delight of both, the hail was responded to.

Hurriedly changing their direction, they went on as rapidly as the rough ground would allow, getting an answering hail every time they shouted, and each time louder, as if those who called were also coming toward them.

Ten minutes later they heard voices, by degrees these became a murmur, and they knew that there must be several of the men together.

In another ten minutes they came upon a group steadily approaching.

Mutual inquiries took place.

No, the men had not captured the fugitive, but they were sure it was a boy; Dirty Dick was ready to take an oath to that effect, but he was not asked.

Then came the important question—Where were they?

The boatswain gave it as his opinion that they had been going westward, but he could give no reason why; and it was decided to continue in that direction, after Gurr had satisfied himself that the men were all present, though they learned that there had been a good deal of hailing before all were collected.

They trudged on almost in silence, for the whole party were wearied out, till an announcement galvanized them all, for suddenly Dick put an end to the question of their journeying west by suddenly shouting,—

'South ho!'

'Eh? What do you mean?' cried the master.

'I know yon hill,' said Dick, pointing to an eminence dimly seen away before him. 'That's just close to the cove, and if we keep straight on, we shall be in the road in less than half an hour, and at the boats ten minutes later.'

'No, no, my lad,' said the master; 'I don't think that's right.—Yes, it is, my lad; I'm 'most sure of it now.'

Right it was, as was proved a quarter of an hour later, by their striking the rough road at right angles, and there a halt was called.

'Don't seem any good to go searching along again in

the dark, Mr. Raystoke,' said the master; and the boatswain shook his head decisively.

'All 'bout done up,' he growled.

'We could do no good now,' said Archy, 'for of course I am not sure where the entrance is.'

'Must be getting toward morning too, and time to be aboard, Mr. Raystoke. There, sir, sometimes we win and many more times we lose. We've lost this time, so let's go back aboard, according to orders. Forward right, my lads, and let's make the best of it.'

'Never mind, Mr. Gurr,' said Archy in a low voice. 'I was regularly in despair as I was being taken from one prison to be shut up in another, when I ran up against you. Perhaps we may run up against the smugglers after all.'

'Wish we might,' said the master. 'Oh, how I could fight!'

But they ran up against no smugglers on their way to the boats, which they hailed from the strand, where the water was very low; and soon after they were passing in the lowest of low spirits, out of the cove to the open channel, when once more every one was thrilled with excitement, for right away in the offing they heard a gun.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

'CAN'T be, sir,' said Gurr, as he tried to pierce the darkness, 'because the skipper must be lying at anchor where we left him.'

'Hah! see that?' cried Archy, as the men bent to their oars and made the now phosphorescent water flash.

'Only the oars, lad. Water brimes.'

Thud! came the report of a heavy gun.

'You're right, lad! 'twas the flash from a gun. Some one's pursuing of something. Pull away, my lads, let's get aboard, and the skipper may join in. Bah! what's the good o' shore-going? Man's sure to get wrong there.'

The men forgot their weariness in the excitement, as they realised that some vessel was in chase of a smuggler, but they murmured among themselves at their ill luck at being away from the cutter; for if they had been aboard at the first shot, the anchor would have been weighed or slipped, and the *White Hawk* gone to see what was going on, probably to help capture a heavily laden smuggler craft.

'And we should have took our share, lads,' said Dick in a whisper. 'Hey, boot we are out o' luck.'

'Don't sit muttering and grumbling there, my lad, but pull hard, and let's get aboard,' cried the master, and the

oars dipped away in the dark sea, seeming to splash up so much pale lambent fire at every stroke.

But this was no novelty to the men, and the boats sped on, one in the other's wake, with the crew straining their heads over their left shoulders to catch a glimpse of the next flash which preceded the gun.

'Good six mile away from where we are now,' said Gurr. 'Oh, my lad, my lad, I wish we were aboard.'

But it was a long pull from the cove to where the cutter lay, nearly a mile and a half from the shore, and, though the master and Archy kept straining their eyes to catch sight of their little vessel, she was invisible.

As they rowed on, they kept on increasing their distance from the shore, steering so as to pass along one side of a right-angled triangle, instead of along by the cliff and then straight off; but, as the cutter showed no lights, this was all guess-work, and made the task rather anxious.

The firing kept on, the dull thud of the gun being preceded by the flash, and at each notification of a shot the men gave such a tug at the stout ash blades that they bent, and the boat leaped through the water.

'Hurrah! morning,' cried Archy, and the men answered his remark with a cheer, for there was a grey light coming fast now in the east, but, to the utter astonishment of all, the cutter did not become visible.

They gazed round excitedly as the light broadened, but there was no cutter where they expected she would be, but ten minutes later, dimly seen as yet, they made her out miles away under full sail, in chase of a long, low, three-masted lugger, at which she was keeping up a slow and steady fire.

The men cheered as the direction of the boats' heads was changed.

'Pull, my lads, pull!' cried master and boatswain. Th men responded with another cheer, and the water rattled under their bows.

'It's a long pull,' cried the master; 'but as soon as she sees us, she'll run down and pick us up.'

'Hurrah!' shouted the men.

'Well done, Mr. Brough, well done!' cried Gurr excitedly. Think of him, with hardly a man to help him, sailing the cutter, and keeping up a steady fire like that, Oh, Mr. Raystoke, why aren't we aboard?'

'Ah, why indeed? There she goes again. I say, Mr. Gurr, won't she be able to knock some of her spars overboard.'

'I wish I was aboard the lugger with an axe,' growled Gurr, shading his eyes; and then, placing his foot against the stroke oar, he gave a regular thrust with the man's pull, a plan imitated by the boatswain on board the other boat.

The light increased rapidly now, and the soft grey sky gave promise of a glorious day, but this did not take the attention of those on board the boats, who could see nothing but the lugger trying to escape, and gradually growing more distant, while the cutter kept on slowly, sending a shot in her wake, evidently in the hope of bringing down one of her masts.

'What boat's that, Mr. Gurr?' said Archy at last, drawing the master's attention to one in full sail in the opposite direction to that in which they were going.

'Dunno, my lad. Never mind her. Lobster, I should say.'

'Looks fast and smart for a lobster-boat,' thought Archy, as he kept glancing at the craft, whose aspect seemed to have a strange attraction for him alone. In fact, every eye was fixed upon the two vessels in the

offing, while it seemed to Archy that the boat, which was sailing rapidly, had changed her course on seeing them, and was trying to get close up under the cliffs, apparently to reach the cove from which they had come.

There was nothing suspicious in a sailing-boat making for the cove, but, as the middy looked at it, the boat heeled over in a puff of wind, and he fancied that he caught sight of a familiar figure behind the sail.

It was only a momentary glance, and directly after he told himself it was nonsense, for the figure which had started up in the night, away on the cliff was Ram Shackle, and he could not be in two places at once.

'We shall never do it, my lads,' said the master suddenly. 'Easy—easy. It's of no use to break your backs, and your hearts too. She's sailing two knots to our one. Easy in that boat,' he shouted. 'We can't do it.'

A low murmur arose from both crews.

'Silence there!' shouted Gurr. Then, more gently, 'I don't want to give it up, but you can see for yourself, bos'n, we can't do it.'

'No,' came back abruptly.

'It would only be hindering her too. No, Mr. Raystoke, it's only our old bad luck, and common sense says it's of no use to fight again it.'

'Mr. Gurr,' said Archy excitedly, speaking with his eyes fixed on the sailing-boat.

'Yes, my lad, what is it?'

'Do you think it possible that yonder boat has had anything to do with the lugger?'

'Eh? what?' cried the master sharply. 'Haven't got a glass. I dunno. They're such a set of foxes about here that she might.'

He shaded his eyes with his hand, and took a long look

at her, and once more a puff of wind caught her sail and heeled her over, so that he could get a good look over her side.

She was about a mile away, and well in toward the shore, keeping far enough from the cliffs to catch the land breeze, and now, as the task of catching up the cutter was given up as impossible, the boat took the attention of all.

'Why, she's got a lot of men in her,' cried Gurr excitedly; 'nine or ten lying down in her bottom.'

'Yes,' cried Archy; 'and it doesn't take ten men to catch a lobster.'

'Ahoy, bos'n!' cried Gurr; 'pull off to the west'ard sharp, and cut off that boat if she makes for that way. Try and head her in under the cliff where there's no wind, if she tries to pass you. Look out! she has a lot of men on board.'

The direction of the second boat was altered at once, the men began to pull hard; and just as a dull thud from seaward told that the *White Hawk* was still well on the heels of her quarry, the first boat turned smartly and began to chase.

'I hope you're right, Mr. Raystoke,' said the master. 'I should like to have one little bit o' fun before we go back aboard. Ah, look at her! she don't mean us to overhaul her. Be smart, my lads. Don't cheer, but seem to be taking it coolly. You're right, Mr. Raystoke,' he added a minute later; 'there's something wrong with that boat, or she would not want to run away.'

For the direction of the little yawl they were making for was suddenly changed, and it was evident that, seeing how the second boat, commanded by the boatswain, was going to head her off from the west, she was being put on the other course, so as to run east.

But the first boat was going rapidly through the water now, and a turn of the helm changed her course, so that it would be easy to cut the yawl off from going in the new direction, while an attempt to pass between the boats and head straight for sea was also met by the steersmen of the pursuers.

'Why, what's she going to do?' said Gurr. 'Ah, my lad, it's all a flam. Only a lobster-boat after all. She's going to run in under the cliffs where there's no wind, and of course it's to take up her lobster-pots.'

'If she was only going to take up lobster-pots she wouldn't have tried to run,' said Archy sharply. 'I'd overhaul her, Mr. Gurr.'

'Going to, my lad. Don't you be scared about that. I'll overhaul her, if it's only to get some fresh lobsters for breakfast. There, I told you so,' he continued, after a few minutes' interval, during which the boat was sailing straight in for the cliffs, about five hundred yards away from the landing ledge, away to the west; and as the master spoke the mainsail was rapidly lowered, the jib dropped, and those in the *White Hawk's* leading boat saw that there was a good deal of busy work on board; and before they had recovered from their surprise, several men rose up, oars were thrust over now that the wind had failed, and, with eight men pulling, they were going straight for the cliff.

'Smugglers!' shouted Gurr excitedly. 'Jump up, Mr. Raystoke, and signal the bos'n to come on. We shall have a prize after all, though it's only a little one. Pull my lads, pull!'

The smugglers' boat was now about half a mile away, the men in her pulling with all their might, but the King's boat was the more swift, though after a few minutes'

chase it was evident that the start was in the smugglers' favour.

'Hang them! they're going to run ashore. They've got a nook there, I'll be bound, and as soon as they're landed they'll be scuffling up the side of the cliff. Pull, my lads, and as we reach the rock, out with you and chase them; you can climb as well as they can. If they're getting away, cover them with your pistols, and tell 'em they shall have it if they don't surrender.'

The excitement was now tremendous: the cutter's boat was going fast, and the second boat was closing up, so that it would be impossible for the smugglers to escape by sea. And now, as they drew nearer, Archy saw that his first surmise was right: Ram was in the boat, and right forward, his red cap showing out plainly in the morning light. Jemmy Dadd was there too, and Shackle, beside the big dark fellow who had tricked the lieutenant, while the rest of the crew were strong-looking fellows of the fisherman type.

'Now then there!' shouted Gurr, rising up, but retaining his hold of the tiller with one hand. 'It's of no use Surrender!'

A yell of derision came from the boat, and Ram jumped up and waved his red cap, with the effect that it seemed as if some of the dye had been transferred to Archy's face, which a minute sooner had been rather pale with excitement.

'Pull, my lads, pull, and you'll have them before they land!' cried the master, stamping his foot. 'Here, take the tiller, Mr. Raystoke;' and he shifted his position, passed the tiller to Archy, and stood up and drew his sword.

'Starboard a little—starboard!' he said. 'Run her

right alongside, my lad; and you, my men, never mind your oars, the others 'll pick them up. The moment we touch, up with you, out with your cutlashes, and down with any man who does not surrender.'

'Ay, ay, sir!' cheered the men.

'Now, then,' shouted Gurr, 'do you surrender?'

A derisive laugh came from the smugglers, who pulled their hardest, pretty closely followed by the king's boat, when, just as they seemed to be coming stem on to the rocks at the foot of the cliff, the four men on the starboard side suddenly plunged their oars down deep, backing water, while the men on the larboard pulled furiously, the result being that the head of the boat swung round, and she glided right out of sight behind a tall rock, which seemed part of the main cliff from a few yards out.

A fierce cry of rage came from the master, but he was quick at giving directions, checking the course of his boat, and then proceeding cautiously; and having no difficulty in following under a low archway for some twenty yards, —a passage evidently only possible at extreme low water, —and directly after they were out again in broad daylight, and at the bottom of a huge funnel-like hollow, from which the rocky cliffs rose up some three hundred feet.

It was a marvellously beautiful spot, but the occupants of the *White Hawk's* boat had only eyes then for the smugglers, who had run their boat into a nook just across the bottom of the pool, and they had had time to leap on to the rock, and were rapidly climbing a rough zigzag path

'And us never to have been along here at the right time of the tide to find this hole!' thought Archy, as, in obedience to a sign, he steered the boat across the beautiful transparent pool, and laid her alongside the smugglers boat.

Then oars were thrown down, the men sprang across the smugglers' craft, and, headed by Archy and Gurr, began to climb rapidly after their enemies.

'It's of no use to call upon them to surrender,' said Gurr rather breathlessly, as they toiled up the zigzag.

'We'll make them do it later on,' cried Archy, whose youth and activity helped him to get on first.

'Steady, my lad, steady!'

'But I want to see which way they go.'

'Right, but keep out of danger, my lad. If they show fight, keep back.'

Archy heard, but made no reply, and toiled on up the rugged ascent, straining every nerve as he saw the last smuggler disappear over the top, and, at the next turn he made in the zigzag, he caught a glimpse of the ascent from top to bottom, with the sailors climbing up, and just then there was a fresh cheer, which made him turn swiftly again, to look round and see the second boat gliding through the rocky arch into the pool.

It was rather risky, for he was on a narrow slippery place at one of the turns of the zigzag, and nearly lost his footing, but, darting out a hand, he caught at the rock, recovered himself, and climbed on, to reach the top just in time to see Ram's red cap disappearing some four hundred yards away over a rounded eminence due west of where he stood.

He glanced down again, and then, breathless as he was, ran on over the downlike hillside till he reached the spot where he had seen Ram's red cap disappear, and here he stopped, to make sure of Mr. Gurr seeing the direction he had taken, standing well up with his sword raised above his head in the bright sunshine.

There was nothing visible but soft green rolling cliff



"THE MEN SPRANG ACROSS THE SMUGGLERS' CRAFT, HEADED BY ARCHY."

top, and he looked vainly for some sign of the enemy, eager to go on, but taught caution, and not knowing but what Ram might have taken one direction to lure the pursuers away, while the men were in hiding in another.

But, as he waited and scanned the place around, he suddenly caught sight of what seemed to be a rift against the sky in the edge of a cliff which rose up rapidly, and his heart gave a great throb.

'Let Ram play what tricks he likes,' he said, 'I know where I am now.'

'Well, my lad, well!' panted Gurr, running up, followed by the men. 'Don't say they've got away!'

'No,' cried Archy excitedly. 'I think I can lead you to the foxes' hole. This way.'

And, as he spoke, there came in rapid succession a couple of dull thuds from seaward, and a cheer from the crew behind, as, led by Archy Raystoke, the men now went over the undulating cliff top at a trot.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE discovery of the way through the cliff made clear to Archy several matters connected with the appearance and disappearance of Ram and his companion with the boat, for upon more than one occasion it had seemed impossible that they could have rowed six miles to the cove and come back again. And, excited as the midshipman was, these ideas occurred to him while running along over the top of the down-like cliff.

On looking back beyond the first boat's crew, the head of the second crew could be seen as they reached the top of the zigzag path, where the boatswain waited till the last man was up, and then gave the word for them to double after their fellows.

Seeing that he was so well supported, the master felt that he was ready for any force the smugglers might have to back them up, and, turning to Archy, he suggested that the midshipman should point out the way into the smugglers' cave, and then leave them to do the work.

It will be time enough to talk about that, Mr. Gurr,' said Archy rather breathlessly, 'when we have found the place.'

'But I thought you had found it, my lad!'

'After the tricks played us, I shall not be certain until I see you all right in the cave.'

'But you think it's close here?'

'Yes; unless I am quite wrong, the old quarry is in that great cliff where the grass runs right up to the edge.'

'Then if it's there, and those fellows have gone in, we'll find the way, and go in too.'

'Oh!' ejaculated Archy, stopping short.

'What's the matter, lad?—hurt?'

'No. The place is dark as pitch, and we have no lights.'

'Then we'll strike some with our pistol locks, and set fire to some wood. Never mind the lights. If it's light enough for them, it will be light enough for us, lad. Let's find the way in, and that will be enough. They won't show fight. Let's get on, and we shall be marching them all out tied two and two before they're much older.'

The party kept on along the rugged undulating top of the cliffs, till, after a careful inspection in all directions, Archy declared that they must now be over the cavern.

The second boat's crew had overtaken them now, and, upon receiving this information, the master spread his men out a few yards apart, to sweep the ground after the fashion observed on the previous night.

'You must find it now, my lads,' he said. 'I should say what you've got to look for is a hole pretty well grown over with green stuff right up at the end of a bit of a gully, and looking as if no one had been there for a hundred years.'

'Yes, something like the mouths of the old quarries we have seen,' added Archy.

'Then there's something of the sort down yonder,' cried

Dick, pointing to a spot where the ground seemed to have sunk down.

'Yes,' cried Archy eagerly; 'and that's the place. Look here, Mr. Gurr.'

'What at, my lad?'

'The grass.'

'Well, we want to find smugglers, not grass, my lad.'

'Yes, but don't you see that some one has gone over here lately. The dew is all brushed off, and you can see the footmarks.'

'I can't, my lad. Perhaps you can with your young eyes.'

'Oh, it's all right,' growled the boatswain.

'Keep a sharp look-out, then, and mind no one gets by.'

The little force advanced, with the men spread out to right and left, the officers in the centre, following the trail which led right to the gully-like depression, once doubtless a well-worn track, but now completely smoothed over and grass-grown; and there, sure enough, as discovered only a short time before by Celia, was the scooped-out hollow filled with fern, bramble, and wild clematis, and the rough steps down, and the archway dimly seen beyond the loose stones.

'Halt!' cried the master; and, after a careful inspection had shown that the footprints in the dewy grass had gone no farther than the entrance, the men were called up, and stood round the pit.

There it all was, exactly as Archy had pictured it in his own mind: the loose stones at the bottom of the hole covering, he was sure, the trap-door he had so often heard opened and shut; but, as he went down a few steps in his eagerness, and scanned the place, he was puzzled and

disappointed; for the trap-door, if that was the spot where it lay, was covered, and therefore the men could not be in the cave.

'Bad job we've got no lanthorns,' said Gurr, who was looking over Archy's shoulder at the low-browed arch of the passage leading right in; 'and it looks bad travelling, but in we've got to go if they won't surrender. Let me go first, my lad.'

For answer the midshipman went down to the bottom of the rough steps, and stood over the trap-door on the loose stones.

'No, no, my lad,' said Gurr kindly, as he joined him. Too rough a job for you. I'll lead, and, hang it! I shall have to crawl. Not very good work for one's clothes. Come along, my lads. You, Mr. Raystoke, and four men stop back, and form the reserve, to take prisoner any one who tries to escape.'

The men descended till every step was occupied, the little force extending from top to bottom.

'Stop a minute, Mr. Gurr. Let the bos'n guard the entry here; I must go with you to act as guide.'

'It aren't all passage, then, like this?'

'No; it's a great open place supported by pillars, big enough to lose yourselves in. But stop; that can't be the way, sir.'

'Oh, hang it all, my lad!' cried the master in disappointed tones. 'Don't say that.'

'But I do,' cried Archy. 'There ought to be a trap-door covered with stones leading down a place like a well.'

'Yes; that's what we've come down.'

'No, no, another. I think it was down here.'

He stamped his foot on the loose stones, and then uttered a cry of joy, for there was a curious hollow sound,

and on stooping down he pulled away some of the great shaly fragments, and laid bare a rough plank with a bolt partly visible.

'Right! Got 'em at last,' cried Gurr. 'Clear off more stones, my lads. No; stop!' he said.

'Yes, I know what you are thinking, Mr. Gurr,' said Archy. 'The men couldn't have shut themselves in there.'

'Course not, my lad. But you are right, that's the way down to their curiosity shop, and they're hiding in this hole here.'

Then, thrusting in his head, and holding on by the rugged stones, he shouted into the hollow passage,—

'Now then, my lads, out you come!'

A pause.

'D'yer hear? The game's up, and if you don't come out quietly, we shall have to fetch you out on the rough.'

Still no reply.

'Come, come, my lads, no nonsense! Surrender. I don't want to use pistols and cutlashes to Englishmen. You know the game's up. Surrender.'

Still no reply.

'I don't think that hole goes in far, Mr. Raystoke,' whispered the master. 'There's no echo like, and it sounds smothered.' Then aloud,—

'Now, then, is it surrender? Oh, very well; I've got some nice little round messengers to send in after you.'

He drew a pistol from his belt and cocked it, winking at Archy as he did so. 'Now, then, once—twice—fire!'

He pointed the mouth of the pistol downward, and drew the trigger, and in the semi-darkness below the overhanging brambles and clematis there was a dull flash, the report sounded smothered, and the place was filled with the dank, heavy-scented smoke.

'There's precious little room in there,' whispered the master. 'If there'd been much of it, we should have heard the sound go rolling along instead of coming back like a slap in the face. Here, one of you, reload that. You, Dick, follow me. If they show fight, you come on next, bos'n, with the whole of your boat's crew.'

'Ay, ay, sir.'

'Hi! in there. Do you surrender?'

There was not a sound, and, after a momentary pause, the master spat in his fist, gripped his cutlass, went down on all fours, after driving his hat on tightly, and crawled into the hole, followed by Dick.

'Keep a cheery heart on it, lad,' said one of the men just before to Dick. 'We'll fetch you out and bury you at sea.'

Dick drove his elbow into the man's chest for an answer, grinned as he felt the point of his cutlass, and dived into the hole, while the boatswain and his men stood waiting eagerly, ready to plunge forward at the first sound of a scuffle.

Archy peered in at the dark passage, his heart beating as he listened to the noise made by the two men crawling in, and the last of the two had hardly disappeared when there was a shout, a scuffle, and the boatswain plunged in.

'All right!' they heard Gurr say. 'I've got him. Hold still, you varmint, or I'll cut your ears off. Here, Dick, get by me, and go forrard if you can.'

There was more scuffling, and the rattle of a stone or two, as the listeners pictured in their own minds the man squeezing past the master and his prisoner, and then Dick's voice came out in a half smothered way:

'Can't get no farther. All choked up.'

'All right, then, but make sure.'

'Oh, I'm sure enough,' said Dick. 'It's all a stopper here.'

'Then out you come, my lad,' said the master; and the next minute his legs were seen as he backed out, dragging evidently some one after him who was resisting.

'Here, Dick,' came in smothered tones.

'Ay, ay, sir.'

'Says he won't come. If he gives me any more of his nonsense, touch him up behind with the pynt of your cutlash.'

'Ay, ay, sir.'

'Yah! cowards!' came in angry tones.

'Ram!' exclaimed Archy, as the boy, looking hot and fierce, was dragged out by the master, to stand looking round him as fiercely as a wild cat.

'Hullo!' cried Archy. 'It's my turn now, Ram;' but he repented his words directly, as he saw the reproachful look the boy darted at him. Then he forgot all directly, as he exclaimed,—

'I see, Mr. Gurr, I see! The smugglers are down here after all, and they left this boy behind to fasten the door, and cover it over with stones.'

Unable to contain himself, Ram thoroughly endorsed the midshipman's words by giving an angry stamp upon the bottom of the hole.

'That's it!' cried Gurr. 'Here, chuck these stones into the passage, my lads;' and the rough trap-door was laid bare, the two bolts by which it was secured were seen to be unfastened, and the lock unshot.

'No way out, Mr. Raystoke, is there?'

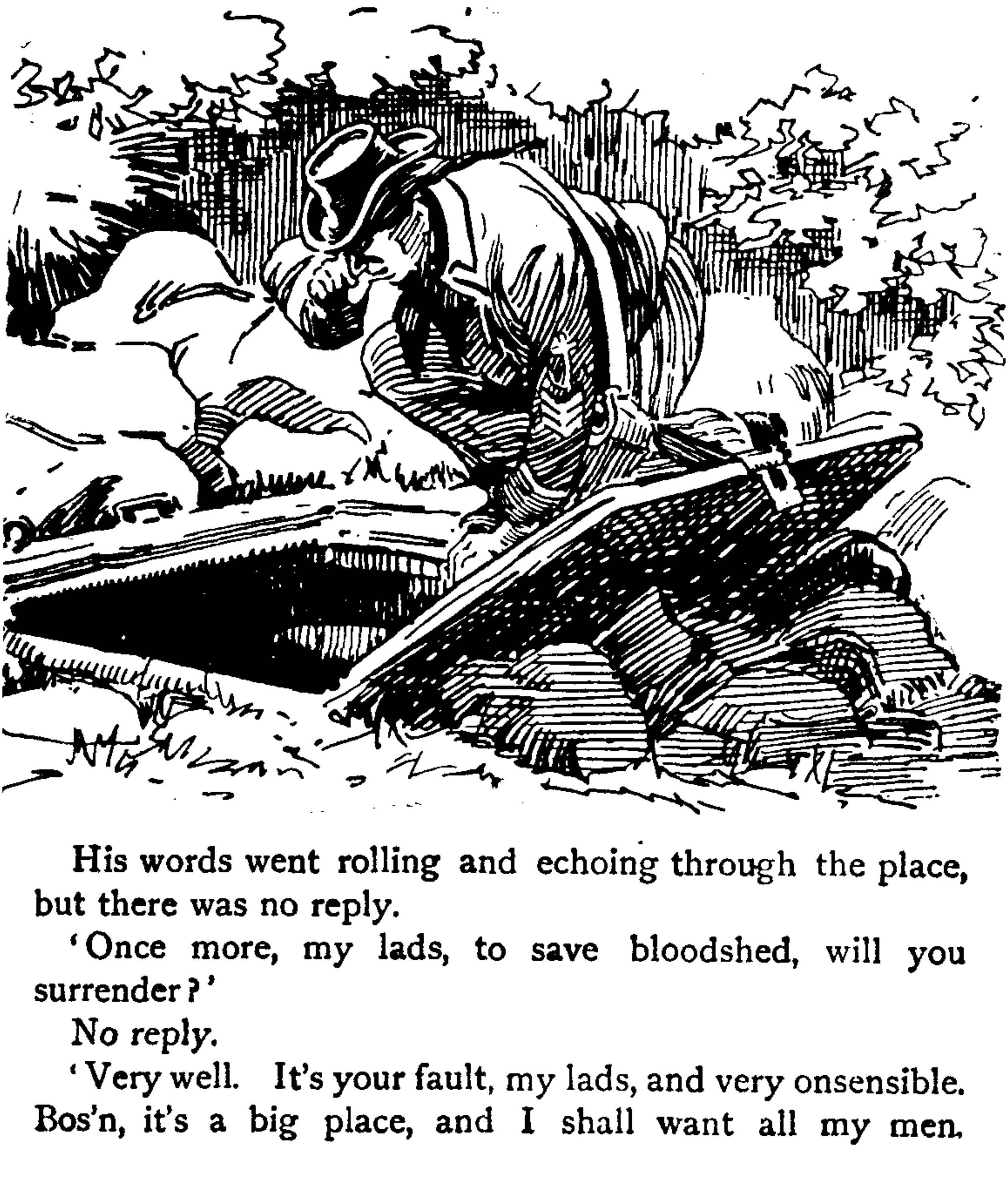
'No.'

'Then we've got 'em trapped safe this time,' said Gurr, as the door was thrown open. 'Bad job we've no lanthorns;

but never mind, my lads. If they won't surrender, you must feel your way with the pynts of your toothpicks.'

There was a murmur of excitement among the men, and then Gurr leaned down over the hole, put his hand to his mouth, and shouted,—

'Below there! In the King's name—surrender!'



His words went rolling and echoing through the place, but there was no reply.

'Once more, my lads, to save bloodshed, will you surrender?'

No reply.

'Very well. It's your fault, my lads, and very onsensible. Bos'n, it's a big place, and I shall want all my men.

You're all right here; with one you ought to be able to hold this.'

'And the prisoner?'

'No; we'll take him with us. Here, lash his hands behind him, and tie his legs together. We'll lay him down to have a nap somewhere yonder down below. That's right,' he continued, as a man produced a piece of line, and firmly secured the boy, who was lowered down to one of the men who had descended, laid on the stones in a corner at the bottom; and then, after giving the word to be ready, Gurr braced himself up.

'You'll stop aside me, Mr. Raystoke, and try and guide.'

'Yes, sir.'

'You understand, bos'n, down with the first who tries to escape up the hole here.'

'Ay, ay.'

'Then, now, forward!' cried Gurr; and, closely followed by Archy and his men, he descended into the old quarry, and then stood listening at the top of the slope, before preparing to advance into the enemy-peopled darkness right ahead.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ARCHY felt his heart throb as he led the way down the slope, every step of which seemed so familiar that he advanced without hesitation, the knowledge of how many sturdy men he had at his back keeping away the natural shrinking which under other circumstances he might have felt.

'Halt!' said the master suddenly, and then in a whisper to his guide, 'Strikes me as they'll have the best of it if they should fight, my lad.'

'Not much,' replied Archy; 'it's as dark for them as it is for us, so that they can't take us at a disadvantage. Call on them to surrender again.'

'Ay, to be sure,' cried the master; and once more he summoned the smugglers to give in.

There was not a sound to suggest that his orders were heard.

'Don't know what to do, my lad,' whispered the master again. 'If we go forward, we're leaving the way open for the enemy to attack the watch at the entrance, and we don't want that. Are you sure they're here?'

'I feel certain of it,' said Archy in the same low tone. 'They must be, but they're hiding, so as to try to escape, or else to take us at a disadvantage.'

'Well,' said Gurr, 'let them. So long as they come out and fight fair, I don't care what they do. Here, four of you stop here; Dick, take command. We'll go forward and turn the enemy, and try to take them in the rear. Stand fast if they come at you; no pistols, but use your cutlasses. We shall come up to you at the least sound, to help.'

The men uttered a low 'Ay, ay, sir,' speaking as if they were oppressed by the darkness, and the master whispered.

'Now, my lad,' he said, 'try and give us the shape of the place like.'

Archy obeyed, and explained where the smugglers' stores lay, and the pile of little kegs, if they had not been moved, the place where he had slept, and the positions of the huge pillars and heaps of broken stones.

'And you was shut up here all that time, and didn't go mad!' said Gurr. 'Well, you are a wonder! Tell you what, my lad, I should just like to make sure that those brandy kegs are still here, and then I think we'll be off, and come back with lights. There's no one here but ourselves. Place isn't big enough for any one to be hiding without our hearing them?'

'Plenty, Mr. Gurr,' said Archy firmly; 'and I am sure they are here; but it is impossible to search without lights. They may be hiding behind the pillars or piles of stone. Have lights got as soon as possible, and then we can come and make them prisoners.'

All this was said in a hurried whisper, as the two stood together in front of their men, and in absolute darkness, for they had advanced into the place far enough for the faint light which filtered down from the trap-door to be completely lost.

'Yes; but I'd like to be able to tell the skipper that we

have got something in the way of a prize for the men. Can you lead us to it, my lad?'

'But you couldn't take it away.'

'Well, we might carry one keg aboard, as a sample. Now then, where will it be from here?'

'Give me your hand, and I'll lead you right to it.'

'There you are. Take care how you go. Can you keep close behind us, my lads? Better join hands. Now then, are you ready?'

'Ay, ay,' came in a low murmur; and, grasping the master's hand, Archy led on, fully believing that the smugglers were still there, but feeling that they would keep in hiding, and try to escape when they were gone.

'Say, my lad,' whispered the master, 'I pity you—I do from my soul. Think of you being shut up all alone in a place like this! Hah! Look out!'

The order was needless, for the smugglers gave every one warning to do that.

One moment the King's men were advancing cautiously through the darkness, the next, without a sound to warn them, there was a rush; blows fell thick and fast, cudgel striking head, cutlass, shoulder, anything that opposed the advance; and in less time than it takes to describe the encounter, the sailors were beaten down or aside, and the party of four, who were warned of what to expect by the noise in their front, advanced to the help of their friends, but only to be beaten down or aside by the gang which rushed at them.

'Stop them, Dick. Down with them!' shouted the master, as soon as he could get on his feet. 'Hi, Dick! pass the word to the bos'n to look out. Here, Mr. Raystoke! Hi, bos'n, down with that trap and make it

fast. Mr. Raystoke, I say, where are you? which way is it? Who's this?'

'No, no, sir,' cried one of them; 'it's on'y me.'

'Mr. Gurr! Here!' cried Archy. 'Where are you?'

'At last. Where were you, then?'

'On the stones, half stunned,' cried Archy. 'Here, all get together and follow me.'

'What are you going to do?'

'Make for the trap-door—sharp! They're fighting there.'

'Oh, dear, who'd have thought it was this way!' grumbled the master. 'Talk about blind man's buff! Sure you're going right, lad? Shall I fire a pistol to make a flash?'

'No; I know.'

'Hah!' cried Gurr, as an echoing bang ran through the great cavern. 'Bravo, bos'n!'

The bang was followed by a heavy rattling sound perfectly familiar to Archy, as he hurried the master along to the foot of the slope.

'Are you all there?' cried Archy.

'Yes'—'No'—'No,' came from different directions.

'Then keep up this way, and be ready for another rush.'

'Ay,' cried the master loudly; 'and I warn you fellows now, I'd have treated you easy; but if you will have it, the word's war, and a volley of bullets next time you come on.'

'No, no, don't fire! you'll hit our own men,' whispered Archy, as he reached the top of the slope. 'Ah! who's this?' he cried, as he nearly fell over a prostrate figure.

'Steady, my lad, steady!'

'Steady it is,' said another voice.

'What, bos'n?'

'Yes, sir, and me too. Oh, my head! how it bleeds!'

'Why, what are you doing here?'

'They came at us, sir, like mad bulls, and 'fore I knew where I was they had me. Pair o' hands pops up out of the hole, takes hold of my legs, and I was pulled down, had a crack of the head, was danced on, and here I am, sir.'

'And me too, sir,' said the other voice. 'But, I'm much worse than him.'

'But the smugglers?'

'All seemed to come over us, sir; banged the door down, and they've been rattling big stones on it. There, you can hear 'em now.'

In corroboration of the boatswain's words, there was a dull thunderous sound overhead, as of great stones being thrown down over the trap-door, and all listened in silence for a time till the noise ceased.

The silence was broken by Gurr, who suddenly roared out, as if he had only just grasped the position,—

'Why, they've got away!'

'Every man jack of 'em, sir, and they all walked over me.'

'And they've shut us in!'

Yes, Mr. Gurr,' said Archy sadly; 'they've shut us in.'

But if they were here,' cried the master; 'that's what I wanted to do to them. I say, Mr. Raystoke, you've done it now.'

Half angry, half amused, but all the while smarting with the pain caused by a blow he had received, Archy remained silent, listening to the heavy breathing and muttering of his companions in misfortune. The sounds above ground had ceased, and it was evident that the smugglers had made good their escape.

Again the silence was broken by the master, who raging with pain and mortification, exclaimed,—

'Well, Mr. Raystoke, sir, you know all about this place; which is the way out?'

'Up above here, Mr. Gurr, close to where we stand.'

'Very well, sir; then why don't you lead on?'

'Because they have shut and fastened the trap, and heaped about a ton of stone upon it.'

'Well, then, we must hack through the door with our cutlashes, and let the stone down.'

'What's that?' cried Archy excitedly,—'a light!'

For there was a dull report and a flash of blue like lightning; and, running down the slope, the midshipman beheld that which sent a thrill of terror through him. For, away toward the far end of the cave, there was a great pool of flickering blue light; and, as it lit up the ceiling and the huge square stone supports of the place, he saw that which explained the meaning of what had seemed to be a wonderful phenomenon.

There, beyond the flickering pool of blue and yellow flame, which was rapidly spreading in every direction, he could dimly see quite a wall of piled-up kegs, one of which lay right in the edge of the pool of fire, and suddenly exploded with a dull report, which blew the tongues of fire in all directions, half extinguishing them for the moment, but instantaneously flashing out again in a volume of fire, which quadrupled the size of the pool, and began to lick the sides of the kegs.

'The wretches! they fired the spirits before they escaped,' cried Archy, who realised to the full what had been done; and, for the sake of our common humanity, let us say it must have been an act of vindictive spite, aimed only at the destruction of the proof spirit, so that it



"IT WOULD WAS A DUEL REPORT."

might not fall into the sailors' hands—not intended to condemn them to a hideous death.

'Back quick to the entrance! We must hack down that door,' roared Archy.

'Ay, ay,' shouted the men, who the moment before were mad with terror, but who leaped at the command as if their safety were assured.

'No, no!' shouted the midshipman, as a fresh keg exploded; and in the flash of flame which followed, the place glowed with a ghastly light.

'Yes, sir, yes!' shouted the men.

'I tell you no,' cried Archy; 'we should be burned or suffocated long before we could get that open.'

And, as in imagination he saw the men fighting and striving with one another to get to the trap-door, which remained obstinately closed, he clapped his hand on Mr. Gurr's shoulder.

'I know another way,' he cried. 'Follow me.'

'Hurrah!' yelled the men, and the lad had taken a dozen steps toward the pool of fire, when a wild shout came from near the entrance.

'Ah! who's that?' cried Archy, as he mentally saw a wounded man being left behind.

'Don't leave a poor fellow to be burnt to death, Mr. Raystoke,' cried a familiar voice.

'Ram!' cried Archy, running back to where the boy lay bound behind a pile of stones, forgotten for the time, and unheeded by his companions.

'Yes, it's me,' said the boy excitedly.

'Quick! Get up. Can you walk?' said Archy, cutting him free.

'Yes,' cried the lad.

'Then come on!'

'For the top passage,' whispered Ram. 'That's the only way now.'

'Yes. Follow me.'

The midshipman had hardly given the command when there was another explosion, a fresh flash of fire, which nearly reached them, and he saw beyond the dancing tongues of flame the black opening he sought.

But this fresh explosion—one of which he knew scores must now rapidly follow—checked him for the moment, and he saw that Ram had disappeared.

'It's our only chance, my lads,' cried Archy. 'Are you all ready?'

'Ay, ay.'

'Hold your breath, then, as you get to the fire, and follow me.'

'Through that blaze, my lad?' whispered the master.

'Yes. Don't stop to talk. Now, then,' roared Archy, come on!'

'Hurrah!' cried the men wildly; and Archy dashed forward, but was thrown back, and had to retreat, as a fresh keg exploded and added to the size of the pool, now almost a river of fire many yards wide.

'It's now or never!' cried Archy frantically, and he rushed into the blue flames, which leaped about his feet and up as if to lick his face.

A dozen strides, splashing up blue fire at every step, and he was through it, and where a faint current of cold air seemed to be meeting him.

Almost as he reached the farther side, the men came leaping and yelling after him, to stand beating the tongues of fire from their feet and legs.

Bang—bang—a couple more explosions, and the men

crowded up to Archy, the master included, as if to ask what next.

'Are you all here?'

'Ay, ay, sir.'

'And that boy?'

'I'm here,' cried Ram. 'Quick, before they all go off.'

'Yes,' said Archy. 'Forward!'

He led the way into the darkness once more, but into an atmosphere which he could breathe. Then up the familiar way, with its rugged steps, and on to the newly mortared wall, with its loophole, through which the glorious light of day streamed.

'Now, my lads, cutlasses here. That wall's new. Four of you work, and loosen the stones, the others take them and throw them back below.'

The men cheered, and, headed by Mr. Gurr and Dick, worked as they had never worked before.

The stones were hard to move at first, but it was child's play compared to the toil through which the young midshipman had gone when he attacked the wall. First one yielded, then another, and, as they were dragged out, the men cheered, and passed them back to those down the rough steps.

With every stone removed, hope strengthened the little party; but as the explosions followed fast, and the flames began to flicker and play up the passage in which they were penned, Archy closed his eyes for a few moments to mutter a prayer, for his thoughts were getting wild.

Just then, he knew that some one else thought as he did, for a hand touched his arm, and a voice whispered,—

'It wasn't my fault. It must have been Jemmy Dadd. I say—case they can't make a way out in time—shake hands once, mate. I do like you.'

Something like a hysterical sob burst from the young midshipman's breast at this; and, facing death as he was just then,—a horrible death which might follow at any moment,—the lad's hand grasped that of his young gaoler —officer and smuggler, but both boys of one blood, who had fought each according to his lights.

'Hah!' sighed Ram, as he gripped hard, and then let go. 'Now, then, tell 'em to shove the stones, sharp, and let 'em fall out. *Quick!* before the powder ketches.'

'Powder?' said Archy in an awe-stricken whisper.

'Yes; there's a lot not far from the kegs.'

The men cheered, as the fresh order was given, and a new set took the places of those who were growing weary, sending the stones out rapidly, till there was room for a man to creep through.

'Here, Ram, you through first, and show them how to climb on the shelf.'

'No, no, you lead, Mr. Raystoke,' cried the master.

'Silence, sir! I know what I'm doing,' yelled Archy. '*Out with you, Ram.*'

The boy went through like a rabbit, passing something dark before him, and then rapidly one by one the men followed, with the flames roaring horribly now below, and explosion after explosion following quickly, the cave rapidly becoming a reservoir of fire.

'Hurrah! that's all,' cried Mr. Gurr. 'Now, Mr. Raystoke.'

'No, sir, you.'

'I say you.'

'And I—'

Archy yielded to his superior in the expedition, crept out, and the master was following, and got stuck, but a fierce tug from a couple of the men set him free, and he

had only just joined the two boats' crews standing side by side on the shelf of rock, when the whole cliff seemed to shake; and, as if the passage they had left were some vast cannon, the artificial wall left was blown right out by an awful burst of flame, the stones hurtling down as if the end of the cliffs had come, and falling with a mighty splash into the chasm.

The men stood white and awe-stricken, expecting the cliff to crumble away beneath them, but save that a stream of fire roared out of the opening, all was now still.

Then, in the midst of the awe-inspiring silence, Ram spoke,—

'I thought it wouldn't be long before the powder caught;' and then, before any one could reply, the lad said quietly, 'I didn't want to be burnt to death. Better go to prison for smuggling. I say, I got this rope. Hadn't we better make it fast somewhere, and then you can all get down to the big shelf? I'll come last, and unfasten it.'

'And then how will you get down?' said the master suspiciously.

'Oh,' said Ram, laughing, 'I can climb down; can't I, orficer?'

'Yes,' said Archy quietly. 'He can get down. You will not try to escape, will you, Ram?'

'No; not I. What's the good?' said Ram sadly. 'It's all over now.'

The rope was made fast, and by its help the men easily reached the great ledge, Ram coming down soon after with the coiled-up rope about his shoulder and under one arm.

'Couldn't have got away if I wanted to,' he said, laughing frankly in Archy's face. 'I say, I am hungry! aren't

you? Don't I wish I'd got one of mother's baskets full of good stuff!'

'Where's your mother?' asked Archy.

'Up at the farm.'

'And your father?'

'Oh, he went off in the lugger this morning, after they'd tried to run a cargo. Your cutter was too quick for them though. We tried to get out to her, but the skipper sent a shot at us, and we came back here, only you saw us, and run us down.'

'Where do you suppose your men are now?' asked Archy.

'Don't know, and if I did, I wouldn't tell,' said the boy bluntly. 'I say,' he added, after a pause, 'I give you a pretty good run last night, didn't I?'

'You young dog!' growled the master.

'Well, if I hadn't, you'd have found the way in yonder, and I wasn't going to let you if I could help it.'

'Ah, you'll be hung, sir.'

'Get out!' cried Ram. 'Your skipper wouldn't hang a boy like me. Think the cutter will be long?' said the boy after a pause, during which all had been watching the flame which seemed to flow out of the opening far overhead.

'I don't know; why?' replied Archy.

'Because she'll have to come and take us off. This rope's long enough, and we shall have to slide down into a boat.'

But the cutter was long. For the lugger had escaped to Holland consequent upon the *White Hawk* being so short-handed, and it was toward evening that she came close in to search for the crews, and all the party descended in safety to the boat, which rowed under in answer to the signals made by firing pistols.

As to the boats that passed under the archway, they were prisoned till the next low water.

'Satisfied?' said the lieutenant, after all were on board, and he had heard the report. 'More than satisfied. I was horribly disappointed at losing the lugger, and I made a hard fight for it, but your news—my dear boy—my dear Mr. Gurr, this is splendid! What a despatch I can write!'

'It will be the breaking up of the gang, will it not, sir?' asked Archy.

'Yes, my dear boy; and an end to this wretched work. They must promote me now, and draft you, too, into a good ship. If we can be together, Mr. Raystoke, I shall be delighted.'

That same night, as he was thinking about Ram Shackle, Archy went up to the lieutenant, who was walking up and down rubbing his hands.

'Beg pardon, sir, but may I ask a favour?'

'A dozen if you like, Raystoke, and I'll grant them if I can. Want a run ashore?'

'No, sir. I want you to be easy with that boy. He was very kind to me when I was a prisoner.'

'Hum! hah! Well, I don't know what to say to that. Here, my man, fetch that boy on deck.'

Ram came up, whistling softly, and looking sharply from one to the other.

'Now, sir, take off your cap,' said the lieutenant sternly.

Ram did not look a bit afraid, but he doffed his red cap.

'I suppose you know, sir, that you'll be sent to gaol?'

'Yes.—I knew you wouldn't hang me.'

'And pray what have you to say for yourself?'

'Nothing that I knows on,' said Ram. 'Yes, I have. I say father's gone, and I dessay he won't come back for

ever so long, and I don't want to go among the Dutchmen. May I stop here 'long of him? There won't be no more smuggling to do.'

'You mean you want to volunteer for His Majesty's service?'

'Yes, that's it,' said Ram cheerfully. 'May I?'

'Yes,' said Lieutenant Brough shortly. 'There; you can go below.'

Ram waved his red cap, tossed it in the air, and turned to Archy.

'I say, orficer,' he said, 'I know where your little sword is. You send one of your chaps to-morrow to mother, and tell her I'm aboard and going to be a sailor, and she's to give him your little sword as father put in the top drawer.'

Archy's eyes sparkled, for the loss of his dirk was a bitter memory.

'Humph!' said the lieutenant, as Ram went below; 'not a bad sort of boy. Well, Mr. Raystoke, will that do?'

Archy shook the hand held out, and went aft to gaze at the cliff, feeling that somehow he liked Ram Shackle.

Then he turned, rather despondent, for he knew that the next day there would be an expedition ashore, when visits would be paid to the farm and to the Hoze, and he felt uncomfortable about the Graemes.

CHAPTER XL.

'HULLO, young fellow!'

'Hullo, orficer!'

'You must not speak like that,' said Archy, as he encountered Ram on deck next morning, whistling softly as he neatly coiled down a rope. 'And you must touch your cap.'

'That way?' said Ram.

'Yes; that will do, but you must say "Sir," or "Ay, ay sir."'

'Ay, ay, sir.'

'Well, you seem to be settling down very soon.'

'Oh, yes, I'm all right. What's the good of making a fuss. Going ashore?'

'Yes. Do you want to go?'

Ram shook his head.

'No; I should only see some of our chaps, and it would look as if I'd been splitting on them; and I didn't, did I?'

'No; you behaved very bravely and well, Ram.'

'Mean it—*sir?*'

'Yes, I do, indeed.'

'Thank ye—sir,' said Ram. 'No, don't let the skipper send me ashore; and—I say'—

'Yes?'

'Tell mother I'm all right, and that I shan't have to go to prison, and that I'll get some one to tell her how I'm getting on now and then. She's a good one is mother, that she is.'

'I'll tell her you have given up all smuggling, and that you are going to be a good sailor now.'

'Yes, do, please—sir. She hates the smuggling, and used to beg father not, but he would do it. And I say, are you going up to the Hoze?'

'Yes; we shall search the farm and the Hoze too.'

'Won't find nothing at the farm. Father never had nothing there, not even a keg. And you won't find nothing at the Hoze.'

'Not in the cellar?'

'No,' said Ram frankly.

'How long has that Sir Risdon Graeme been a smuggler?'

'Him? Never was one, poor old chap, only father good as made him lend us his cellar, because it was nice and handy, and nobody would think of going and searching there. Ha, ha, ha!' laughed Ram, showing his white teeth; 'you people went up there one day and touched your hats to Sir Risdon, and were afraid to go close up to the house, when all the time the cellar was choke full.'

'I remember,' said the midshipman; 'and I found it out. But look here, Ram, how could your father make Sir Risdon, who is a gentleman, lend him the cellar?'

''Cause father and mother used to pretty well keep 'em. I had to be always going without father knowing, and taking 'em bread and butter and bacon and eggs. They just are poor. Mother used to send me, and she often used to tell me that they was 'most starved to death.'

'Then Sir Risdon didn't get anything by the smuggling?'

'Him!' cried Ram. 'Why, father sent me up one day with a keg of brandy for him, and a piece of silk for her ladyship; I did get hot that day carrying of 'em up the hill. It was last summer.'

'Yes; and what did Sir Risdon say?'

'Say? He 'most shied 'em at me, and I had to carry 'em back. My! that was a hot day and no mistake.'

Somehow Archy felt relieved about the Graemes, and, after a little consideration, he went and reported all he had heard to the lieutenant, who nodded his head, looked severe, and ordered the two boats to be manned.

The midshipman took the order on deck, and Ram stared.

'I say,' he said, 'what's the good of going now? You'll have to row all the way to the cove and walk all the way along by the cliffs. If you wait till the tide's right out, you can get in through Grabley's hole.'

Archy reported this, and in due time Gurr was left in charge of the cutter, the lieutenant went off in one boat, and the other was in Archy's charge.

It all seemed very matter of fact now, as they rowed in through the opening, left the boats in the little pool, climbed the zigzag; and a halt was called, during which the little lieutenant wiped his streaming face, and recovered his breath.

Then the party marched for the farm, where, red-eyed, and her florid face mottled and troubled-looking, Mrs. Shackle met them.

'Well, woman,' said the lieutenant severely; 'I have to search this place.'

'If you please, sir,' said the woman humbly.

'One moment. Answer me honestly. Is there any contraband article stored about the farm?'

'No, sir, and never was.'

'Humph! that's what your son said.'

'My son? Oh, pray, pray tell me, gentlemen, is he safe? I heard that he was burned to death.'

'Your son is quite well, aboard my ship.'

'Thank God! oh, thank God!' cried the poor woman, sinking upon her knees to cover her face with her hands, sobbing violently, and rocking herself to and fro.

'There!' she cried, jumping up quickly, and wiping her eyes; 'I've no cause to fret now.'

'He has volunteered for the navy,' continued the lieutenant; 'and if he is a good lad, we shall make a man of him.'

'Then you will, sir; for a better boy never stepped.

'For a smuggler, eh?' said the lieutenant drily.

'Well, sir, he was my husband's boy, and he did what his father told him.'

'And your husband?'

'The men came and told me, sir, that he escaped in the lugger.'

'And the men—where are they?'

'They got away yesterday, sir, those who were left. They felt that they must leave these parts for good.'

'Yes, for *good!*' said the lieutenant emphatically. 'Now, Mr. Raystoke, have you anything to say?'

'Only to deliver my message. Mrs. Shackle, Ram told me to tell you he was all right.'

'Thank Heaven!' said the woman, wiping away a tear; 'and you won't punish him, sir, and you'll keep him away from the smuggling?'

'Never fear,' cried the lieutenant, laughing.

'You were to give me my dirk, Mrs. Shackle.'

'Oh, yes, sir!' cried the woman, crossing to an old bureau, and taking out the little weapon. 'And I suppose, sir, all the old home will be taken and destroyed?'

'Oh, I don't know. We shall see. But, look here, my good woman; do you want to sail right or wrong now?'

'Oh, right, sir, please.'

'Then tell me honestly where there are any more goods stored?'

'Everything left, sir, was put in the old quarry.'

'Nothing up at that house on the hill?'

'No, sir, I think not. It's all over now, and my husband has gone, so I may as well speak out.'

'Of course. It will be best for you—and for your son.'

'They only stored cargoes up at Sir Risdon's because it was handy, sir, and then took them on afterwards to the big store in the old quarry that was burned last night. But pray tell me, sir, was any one hurt?'

'No, but we have no thanks to give your people. Now, Mr. Raystoke.'

He marched out, and Archy was following, but Mrs. Shackle arrested him.

'God bless you, my dear!' she whispered. 'I knew about you being there, but we couldn't help it, and Ram used to tell me all about it, and how he liked you; and we sent you everything we could to make you comfortable. Be kind now to my son.'

'If Ram turns out a good lad, Mrs. Shackle, he shall never want a'—

Archy was going to say friend, but he could not, for Mrs. Shackle had thrown her arms about his neck in a big, motherly hug, from which the young officer escaped red-faced and vexed.

'I wish she hadn't kissed me,' he said to himself, after making sure that no one had seen. 'And she has made my face all wet with her crying.'

They were on the march now to the Hoze, with the lieutenant in the highest of glee, and chatting merrily to Archy as a brother officer and a friend.



'If I could only have got the lugger too, Raystoke,' he cried, 'it would have been glorious! but I couldn't do impossibilities, could I?'

'I am sure you did wonders, Mr. Brough,' said Archy.

'Well, never mind what I did, sir. You and Gurr acted so that I'm proud of you both, and of the lads. Completely burned out the wasps' nest, eh? It will be a glorious despatch, Raystoke. By the way, we must go straight down there and see if the place is cool enough to search. There may be a little of the wasps' comb left, eh?'

'I'm afraid the whole of the stores would be destroyed.'

'Ah well, we shall see, and— Who are these?'

'Sir Risdon and Lady Graeme and their daughter,

whispered Archy, who coloured as he saw Celia looking at him defiantly.

They were outside the house, and Lieutenant Brough halted his men, marched forward with the midshipman, and raised his hat, his salute being formally returned.

'I regret to have to come in this unceremonious way, sir,' said the lieutenant.

'Excuse me,' interrupted the baronet. 'I expected you, sir, and, while congratulating you and your men upon their success, I wish to humbly own that my place has unwillingly on my part, been made one of the stores for their nefarious transactions.'

The lieutenant moved away with Sir Risdon, leaving Archy alone with Celia and her mother.

'Oh,' cried the girl, taking a step nearer to the midshipman, 'how I hate you!'

'Miss Graeme!'

'I thought you a nice frank boy, and that you would be our friend.'

'Celia, my child,' whispered Lady Graeme reproachfully.

'I can't help it, mamma. I wanted to help him, but he would keep saying that he must tell of papa because it was his duty.'

'Yes,' said Archy bluntly; 'and so it was.'

'Yes,' said Lady Graeme, 'it was.'

'Oh, mamma dear, pray don't say that. And now he has come with his hateful men to take papa to prison, and'—

'Oh, yes, yes, yes, Sir Risdon, of course, I must write my despatch. But you have given me your word of honour as a gentleman that you never engaged in these contraband practices.'

These words reached the little group, and also Sir Risdon's reply:

'I swear it, sir; and it was only'—

'Yes, yes. Never mind that. Word of honour's enough between gentlemen. Oh, no, I shall not search, sir. I am satisfied.'

'Oh!' ejaculated Celia.

'Hah!' ejaculated Archy in a sigh of relief.



'Now, Mr. Raystoke, midshipman,' said the lieutenant merrily. 'My chief officer, ladies! Come, we have a great deal to do. Good morning. If you will pay us a visit on the cutter, we shall be only too proud to see you.'

A friendly salute was interchanged, and Archy emphasized his by holding out his hand to Celia.

'Good-bye,' he said. 'Don't hate me, please. I only did my duty.'

'I don't hate you,' she replied, giving him her hand.

Only a boy and girl; but Archy looked back several times, as they marched downward to the cliff, and then up its steep, grassy slope, to see at a turn a white handkerchief being waved to him.

'Why—hullo, Mr. Raystoke!' cried the lieutenant merrily. 'Oh, I see. Well, wait till you become a post-captain, and I hope I shall be an admiral by then, and that you will ask me to honour the wedding.'

'Hush, pray, sir!' said Archy. 'Some of the men will hear.'

But the men did not hear, for they were quietly trudging along over the short grass, chewing their quids, and discussing the fire in the cave; those who had escaped relating again to those who were on the cutter their terrible experiences before the powder caught.

In due time they reached the entrance to the quarry, and found that everything was as they had anticipated, the smugglers having piled quite a ton of stones over the trap-door. These were removed at length, and the door was thrown open, when a peculiar dim bluish mist slowly rose, and disappeared in the broad sunshine.

'Keep back, my lads,' said the lieutenant. 'The powder smells badly, and it would be very risky to go down now.'

'Fire seems to be out,' said Archy, as he held his hand in the bluish smoke, which was dank and cold.

'Not much to burn,' said the lieutenant; and, giving the word, the men bivouacked on the short turf to eat the provender they had brought, quite alone, for not a soul from the cottages between the farm and the cave appeared.

So strong a current of air set through the old quarry, that by the time they had ended the air was good; but now another difficulty arose. There were no lights, and a couple of men had to be despatched to the farm, from whence they returned with four lanthorns which had often been used for signals.

Armed with these, the party descended, and explored the place, to find that, where the powder had exploded, the walls were blackened and grisly, and that scores of little barrel staves were lying about shattered in all directions and pretty well burned away. On the other hand, the staves of the brandy kegs were for the most part hardly scorched, and the stone floor showed no traces of fire having passed.

The spirits had burned vividly till the explosion took place, when the force of the powder seemed to have scattered everything, but it had been saving as well as destructive, separating the brandy kegs, some of which burst and added fuel to the flames, but many remained untouched.

In fact, to the great delight of all, it was found that, though a great deal of destruction had been done, there was an ample supply of the smugglers' stores left to well load the cutter twice; and, jubilant with the discovery, the men returned on board, dreaming of prize-money, but not until a strong guard had been left over the place, in case any of the wasps should return.

But they did not come back. The nest had been burned out, and the smuggling in that part of the Freestone Shore had received so heavy a blow, that only one or two of the men cared to return, and then only for a temporary stay.

Lieutenant Brough's despatch had of course been sent in, and he obtained praise and prize-money.

'But no promotion, Mr. Raystoke,' he cried; 'and of course you can have none until you have passed. They have not even appointed you to another ship.'

'Well, if you are going to stay in the *White Hawk*, sir, I don't know that I want to change. I'm very comfortable here.'

'That's very good of you, Raystoke, very good,' said the lieutenant. 'And then it's of no use to complain. I shall never get my promotion. I'm too little and too fat.'

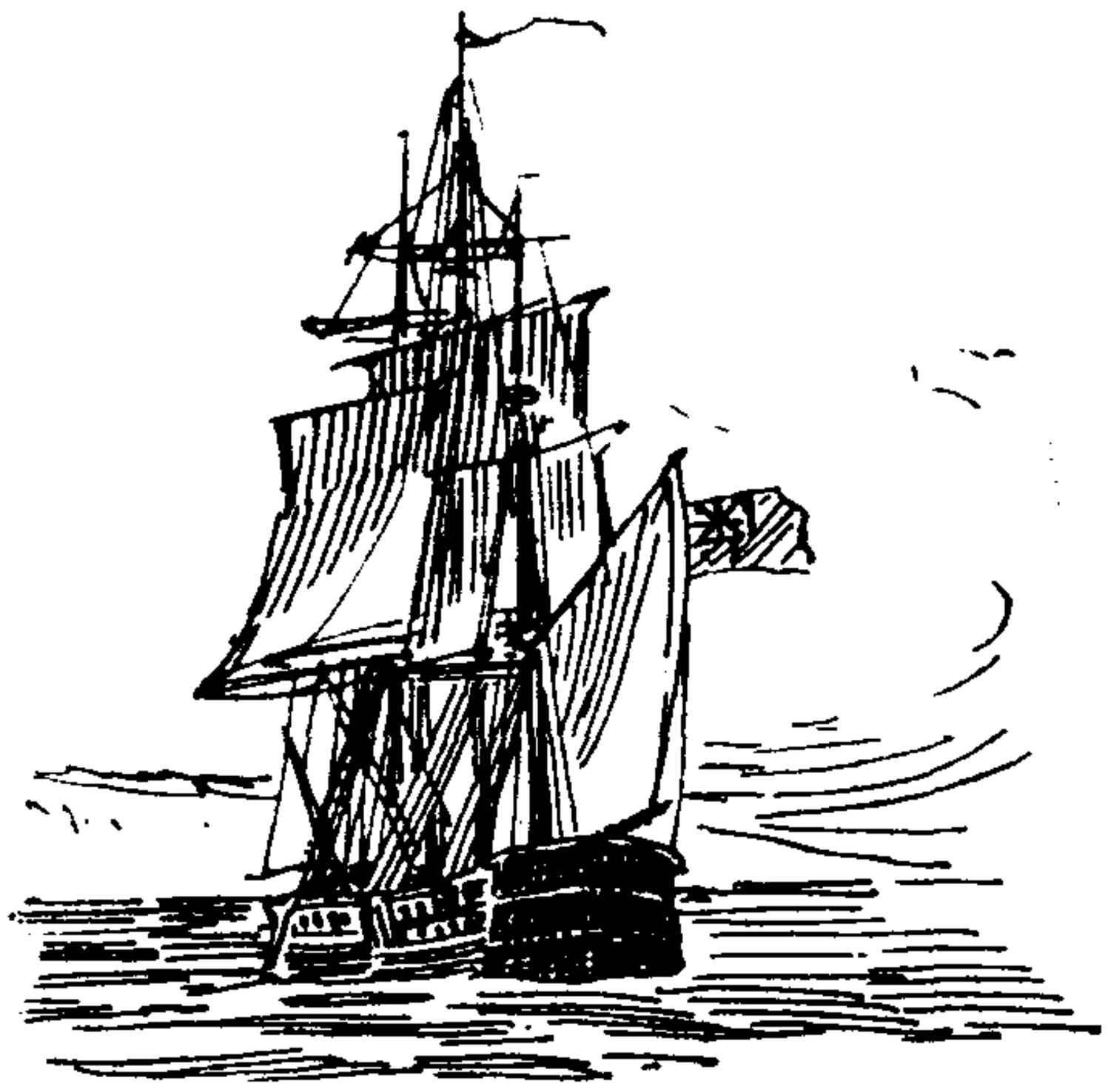
'No, that's not it,' said Archy boldly; 'they think you do the work so well that they will not remove you from the station.'

'No,' said the lieutenant sadly; 'it's because I am so stout. I shall never be lifted now.'

Mr. Brough was wrong, for two years later he was

appointed to a frigate, and his first efforts were directed to getting Archy Raystoke and Ram berths in the same ship, where a long and successful career awaited them.

But with that we have at present nought to do. This is the chronicle of the expedition of the *White Hawk* to crush the smug-



gling on the Freestone Shore, the most famous place for the doings of those who set the King's laws at defiance.

It was some ten years later, when one of His Majesty King George's smartest frigates was homeward bound from the East Indies, where her captain had distinguished himself by many a gallant act, that, as she was making for Portsmouth, with the tall white cliffs of the Isle just in sight, a tall handsome young officer went to the side, where a sun-browned seaman was standing gazing shoreward, shading his eyes with his hand.

'Why, Ram,' said the officer; 'looking out for the scene of some of your old villainies?'

'No, sir,' said the man, touching his cap. 'I was wondering whether my old mother was down on the cliff yonder, looking after the cows.'

'The cows!' cried the young lieutenant. 'Ah, to be sure. Remember the cow falling off the cliff, Ram?'

'Ay, sir, that I do. But look yonder, sir. You could make out the shelf on the big cliff if you had your glass. Remember our tussle there?'

'To be sure I do,' said Lieutenant Raystoke, sheltering his eyes in a very deceptive fashion, for he was trying to make out the old grove of trees amidst which stood the Hoze.

'Mr. Raystoke!'

'Captain calling you, sir,' said a rugged-looking sailor, with a very swarthy face, that looked as if it would be all the better for a wash, but only seemed.

'All right, Dick, my man,' said the young officer; and he hurried to where a plump, rosy little man stood in full post-captain's uniform.

'Ah, there you are, Mr. Raystoke,' said the captain, handing the lieutenant his glass. 'I've been sweeping the shore, and it brought back old days. Look there; you can easily make out the range of cliffs. That highest one is where you and Mr. Gurr were at the burning out of the smugglers ten years ago. How time slips by!'

'Yes, sir,' said Lieutenant Archy Raystoke, returning the glass; 'that's where the wasps' nest was destroyed.'

Then to himself,—

'I wonder whether Celia will be glad to see me.'

She was: very glad indeed.